

Ex-Prisoners and the Transformation of Self through Higher Education

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Abstract

This study explores how experiences of higher education among ex-prisoner's impact upon their path to desistance. It examines their initial catalysts for change and how education enabled them to re-evaluate their sense of selves and provide them with new identities. Through the use of 24 face-to-face semi-structured interviews examining the experiences of ex-prisoners who are studying for degrees, have graduated and in some cases gained successful academic positions, the participants were asked to talk about their life experiences including their childhoods, offending, prison, desistance, employment and the reasons behind why they chose to enter higher education. Their catalysts for change ranged from their experiences of prison where they encountered existential crises created by the pains of imprisonment; how others viewed them; the strengthening of social bonds; to the belief and trust afforded by others being prepared to give them a second chance. Beyond prison, they experienced prolonged periods of liminality where they became trapped in limbo between two social worlds caused by stigma, labelling and rejection. But their unfaltering resilience, persistence and belief and hope for a better future eventually enabled them to develop new identities which were further transformed by external influences as they made their transitions into 'conventional society'. Some preferred to reject their past identities, while others merged their past and new identities to become successful in their chosen career paths. Some have remained in academe where they continue to use their past experiences to inform their teaching and research while others have become counselling professionals viewing themselves as 'wounded healers' by helping others with substance and alcohol issues and homelessness. But all of them used higher education as their conduit to aspire towards self-betterment, a renewed self-belief and self-concept which enabled them to transform their lives.

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Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the thesis

“Education is my route out of crime. If I hadn’t have gone to university I’d have probably ended up serving a long public protection sentence, dead, or serving life” (Stacey)

1.1 Aims of the study

The above quote from Stacey, encapsulates the extent of how education can transform lives which enabled a young woman enmeshed within the criminal justice system with over 100 convictions, to later become a postgraduate and youth offending service case manager. It also offers an insight into the psychosocial approach this study adopted through its analyses of sociological and psychological influences on the participant’s trajectories which are influenced by maturation, employment, education and social bonds (Laub & Sampson, 1993; 2003). On one hand, each of these components had positive influences on the participants transformations because they included rekindling ties with friends and family, financial stability, and upward social mobility (ibid). But on the other hand, there were many phases of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014) caused by stigma (Goffman, 1959) and discrimination but also because of tensions created by upward social mobility which is examined through the lens of Bourdieu’s habitus clive (Bourdieu, 2004) which highlights the psychological cost of success.

Stacey, 26, directly links education to her desistance from crime and has successfully gained two degrees with a first-class honours and masters distinction, but many years since desisting from crime, still feels that her past encroaches on her present. Her painful memories of prison are sometimes evoked by the visible self-inflicted scars on her arms and the psychological pain that led to violent outbursts for which she was subdued with anti-psychotic medication she claims. The prison authorities believed she had bi-polar disorder which went undiagnosed until very recently as her past and present collided.

Stacey’s psychosocial journey begins with her early desistance journey through higher education which influenced her maturation, employment opportunities, financial stability, upward social mobility and a strengthening of social bonds

(Laub & Sampson, 1993, 2003) through rekindling ties with friends and family. Yet despite these positive transitions, her psychological issues continue to create an unending cycle of psychological difficulties (Albertson et al. 2015) that will at times invoke emotions linked to her past experiences and her habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Stacey's story is a powerful one because she was the youngest of the participants in the study who had already made great achievements by the time she was 25, but despite having moved away from offending; her former associates, and transformed her identity through education and employment, the reality of her unending transformation of self is evident within her narrative. This study will demonstrate that although Stacey's story is unique in respect of her age and accomplishments so far, it is not unique in the sense of there being no end to the psychosocial challenges that desisters continually encounter long after crime related factors cease to be pertinent.

The aim of this introductory chapter is to set out the context of the study and to identify how my unique position allowed me to collect rich data from ex-prisoners whose lives have been transformed through higher education. Having shared the experience of being an ex-prisoner who entered higher education to transform my own life, I was able to identify with the issues that the participants faced in their struggle to transform their sense of selves and to be viewed as reformed, law abiding citizens. My background as an ex-prisoner ensured that I was able to engage in meaningful yet at times very challenging discussions with the participants. I was familiar with the tensions that they were experiencing as they strove to change their lives after a period of imprisonment but, there were also aspects of their lives that I had not experienced. My research was located within a period of time when prisoner education was high on the political agenda (see section 1.4). In order to explore the impact education can have on prisoners and ex-prisoner's lives, this study investigated the cognitive transformations (Giordano et al., 2002) of those who benefitted from prison education and college education.

This research study grew out of my own desire to understand these complex psychological and sociological processes that influence prisoners and ex-prisoners in transforming their lives through higher education. In addition, this study analysed the participant's cognitive transformations which include shifts in their thought processes; identities and how they view their past behaviours (Giordano

et al., 2002). This study was able to explore the limitations by examining the participant's ongoing transformation of self, including the inner conflicts they experience that continue long after offending has ceased.

These key factors enabled me to develop a greater understanding of my own position as an ex-prisoner turned academic. From my insider/outsider perspective, I am situated within this study having made significant personal transformations through education and employment. But as this study progressed through the sharing of stories between myself and my participants, alongside much self-reflection, I began to realise I was as much a part of the study as my participants. I also realised that I was still going through my own desistance journey, but not in the sense where I was attempting to abstain from crime. That happened over 20 years ago. Instead it was clear to me that I was still going through a psychosocial transition which consisted of ongoing identity shifts, tensions within my own habitus, psychological trauma, discrimination and stigmatisation. It then occurred to me that sometimes the desistance journey is a process that is unending and so this became one of my main contributions of the study.

Overall this research became a mutually shared ongoing journey between myself and my participants where we all had experienced varying starting points but mostly without endings which is because of the continual barriers we are condemned to throughout the psychosocial life span. The psychosocial approach in this study is unique in that as well as analysing the participants psychological and sociological transitions through conceptual frameworks of desistance and the self, I also use the Bourdieusian 'self-socioanalysis' (2004) perspective as conceptual framework to analyse my own situated position as an ex-prisoner turned academic (see chapter 5). Therefore, I began to analysis my position through a Bourdieusian reflexivity lens but not only as a methodological approach towards building my epistemological position, but as a contribution to future early researchers whose own habitus may influence their research (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 2004). My psychosocial approach did not intend to include an autobiographical position but as it developed the inclusion of self-socioanalysis (Bourdieu, 2004) became impossible to avoid but moreover an essential methodological tool (see also chapter 3). This narrative approach provided a useful framework for investigating the human change process from my unique position as an insider/outsider which invokes the gathering of rich data. Yet as

researchers, it could be argued that most of us do ethnography anyway but write ourselves out of our studies. This was one of the most difficult processes of this study because I was very much a part of it and it was due to my past experiences as a prisoner and desister turned academic, that initiated my desire to conduct this study in the first place. I was in fact a serving prisoner when I made the decision to become an academic so other than the key points that I have outlined in this study, I also argue that it is necessary to include our own voices and in doing so I have taken what might be to some, a controversial step by writing in an autobiographical perspective. But as I discuss in the literature review, there seems to be a growing change in social sciences with researchers making more direct references to themselves within their studies and as a convict criminologist, this is vital as we use our narratives to inform our research and teaching.

1.2 Research Questions

As stated earlier, the central argument in this study posits that there is a separation between desistance from crime and the transformation of self. This is because desistance is crime related while the transformation of self continues beyond the crime related factors. This central argument was investigated through three complimentary sub questions:

(1) What is the relationship between prison and the transformation of self?

The importance of this question was that it investigated the early stages of the desistance process while the participants were in prison. This is significant because prison is rarely considered as a place where the desistance journey begins yet the evidence clearly demonstrates that more ex-prisoners are claiming that prison was their catalyst for change (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016). They also claim that prison provided time and space for self-reflection and change through existential experiences that Aresti et al., (2010) refer to as ‘defining moments’.

Most desistance studies focus on the transformation processes outside of prison which overlooks that it can actually begin within the prison environment so here I set out to answer this question by examining the participant’s negative and

positive experiences of imprisonment both of which lead to transformations. The existential crises created by the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) bring together challenging and difficult experiences which often lead to a successful transformation of self.

(2) To what extent does liminality impact on the transformation process and desistance?

This question was analysed in relation to the recurring liminal processes (Healy, 2010, 2014) where individuals exist between two social worlds that hinder transitions from one stage to the next. And because liminality is practically overlooked in relation to desistance, there is a dearth of empirical data specifically relating to how liminality prevents the transformation of self being accomplished. The experience of liminality begins in prison and was seen as an essential albeit sometimes difficult experience that can have lengthy and painful consequences (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) for people with convictions who are stigmatised and rejected by others.

(3) What do ex-prisoners expect from higher education and are these expectations met?

The participants did not expect education to lead to desistance because they had already reached the initial stage of desistance (Giordano et al., 2002) before they entered higher education. Most of the participants expected higher education to enable a complete transformation of self, but there were many unexpected barriers such as discriminative university admissions policies (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2017) and one participant was even stigmatised and rejected by his fellow classmates. Despite several difficult experiences such as university admissions policies, rejection and stigmatisation, the participants all felt that their lives had in some way progressed as a result of being in higher education (see Darke & Aresti, 2016) and for the majority, it had led to them securing permanent employment. They achieved their expected long-term goals such as gaining their degrees, gaining employment and securing a better future for themselves and their families but because the transformation of self includes psychological changes, some continue to endure challenging and difficult experiences.

1.3 A psychosocial perspective on the transformation of self

The overarching argument of this thesis is that there is a theoretical dichotomy between desistance from crime (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna & Farrall, 2004; McNeill, 2016) and the transformation of self but firstly it is important to understand the concepts of desistance and the transformation of self. Desistance is specifically associated to crime related factors which observes offenders abstaining from criminal activities and reconstrucing new ‘non-criminal’ identities (Maruna, 2001; Giordano et al. 2002). The transformation of self is not specifically linked to crime related factors but instead has its roots in psychology whereby individuals seek to distance their selves as far from their past selves as possible (Erikson, 1959; Maslow, 1943, 1954).

Despite the dichotomy between desistance and the transformation of self, though they both share the same elements of self change, however, desistance falls short of the much broader aspects of self transformation because of its emphasis towards a beginning and end goal of self change where in fact the transformation of self is unremitting and continues many years after crime related factors have been ‘knifed off’ (Laub & Sampson, 2001, p. 49). That said, desistance and transformative theories can also be combined to develop a psychosocial model of the self which explores a more holistic process of self change drawing from the broader literature of education, desistance, psychological and social theories.

The transformation of self can be identified in Maruna & Farrall’s (2004) primary and secondary desistance which involves periods of non offending towards developing new identities and also McNeill’s (2016) tertiary stage of desistance whereby desisters become integrated within their communities as they see themselves through the eyes of others, as having changed for the better. It can be seen even more distinctly within Giordano et al’s (2002) cognitive transformation theory which emphasises internal shifts whereby individuals develop new identities through being open to change and developing aspirations towards a better future self (see chapter 2).

Although each of these desistance theories associate with early transformations, this study advances these perspectives towards a psychosocial process of seamless transitions. These include additional complex issues such as lengthy and

painful periods of existential crises (Butenaite et al. 2016), stagnation and liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014) which incorporate existential crises of ‘defining moments’ (Aresti, 2010; Farrall & Calverley, 2009); psychological and cognitive transitions through negotiating past and new identities (Giordano et al, 2002; Maruna, 2001) and social interactions which involve social bonding and re-integration into society (McNeill, 2016).

The term psychosocial is rarely referred to in the desistance literature, yet it is referred to by Maruna (1999) who argues that the study of criminal careers and desistance needs to embrace a more adequately psychosocial concept of subjectivity which this study does by highlighting the complexities of self-transformations through the narratives of the participant’s life stories.

1.4 Prisoner education and desistance

Prison education can invoke the initial stages of desistance which has been under the political spotlight since the beginning of this study in 2013, but it is essential that education does not become a desistance focussed tool because it then becomes entrenched within the deistance paradigm and purely all about reducing re-offending. It is essential that education is seen as more of a process that leads to identitiy transformations which will give lasting results because education can be a major contributory factor towards the transformation of self. Paulo Freire (1970) asserts that knowledge is a process of inquiry and the practice of freedom, which is an essential process of desistance but also a lifetime experience.

The focus of prison education in relation to reducing re-offending is evident within the political narrative such as in 2016, when the then Prime Minister, David Cameron announced his intended prison’s ‘overhaul’ but it coincided with Dame Sally Coates’ prisons education report of women’s prisons that made several promising recommendations (more on this later). It also coincided with an emergence of contemporary prison to college programmes and so despite the emphasis on reducing recidivism, it was a period of optimism that prisons were finally changing for the better. In 2014, Durham University became the first university in Europe to deliver criminology classes inside prisons. The ‘Inside-Out’ Exchange programme is based on the United States (US) model which was

originally developed at Temple University in Philadelphia in 1997 by Professor Lori Pompei. The programme has since seen over 20,000 students go through the programme in the US. Durham University brought the initiative to the United Kingdom (UK) for the first time which included criminology lecturers travelling to Philadelphia for Inside-Out training inside maximum security correctional facilities in the USA (The Inside Centre, n.d.). The programme is designed to break down barriers and prejudices and provide ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ students with a unique opportunity to study together as peers behind the prison walls. For ‘outside’ students, many of whom will go on to pursue careers in criminal justice and related fields and some of whom have never entered a prison, the programme allows them to learn about crime and justice in a profoundly different way.

A similar initiative by the University of Cambridge ‘Learning Together’ was launched in 2015 with students and prisoners studying together at HMP Grendon, a Category B prison in Buckinghamshire. This too has broken down prejudice and creates new possibilities for all of those who take part. Armstrong & Ludlow (2015) who launched the programme suggest that more such collaborative learning initiatives could help dismantle stereotypes and offer prisoners a meaningful vision for the future after release. They explain that ‘the design and delivery of Learning Together has been research and values led. The aim was to create a space that facilitated and prioritised “connectedness” which from a desistance perspective, they explain: ‘We understand connectedness to be important both for desistance and for learning. Taking desistance first, we know from research that the criminal sanction is stigmatising.

Social stigma inhibits desistance by causing marginalisation and closing down our fullest, best potential selves’ (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2015, p.15). But while prison to college programmes were making headlines for their transformative benefits both in terms of learning, breaking down barriers, and desistance, there was an undercurrent of doom and gloom within British prisons due to increasing problems of overcrowding, drug abuse, bullying and suicide which has more than doubled since the start of this study (see Howard League of Penal Reform, 2018 and the Prison Reform Trust, 2018).

This polarisation of a seamless prison crisis and flourishing prison and college collaboration perhaps offers an insight into universities more than prisons which

are boosting their own impact focussed goals by collaborating in community based projects. It raises questions such as why prisons are experiencing a major crisis while at the same time prison to college programmes are flourishing (see Prisoners' Education Trust, 2017) which is possibly because universities are the dominant factor but if so, how and why? This is by no means critical of the hard working and well-meaning academics who are the crux of developing prison to college programmes but there is perhaps a more personal incentive within the managerial echelons of universities whereby academic staff with good intentions are clearly being exploited by an increasing managerialist and target driven culture (Armstrong, 2018).

Are prison-to-college collaborations inadvertently diversifying prisoners by developing an elite set of learners which make the universities look good while other prisoners cannot get access to education? It is certainly worthy of further exploration because it is reminiscent of the introduction of the IEP (Incentive Earned Privileges) system (Liebling, 2000) which caused a division amongst prisoners. But while IEPs were seen as a controlling mechanism (see Crewe, 2005, 2006) which also created an unfair social class system amongst prisoners, universities are attempting to show that they are conscious about inclusion, diversity and accepting of those on the cusp of society but in truth the evidence shows otherwise (see Prisoners' Education Trust, 2017).

This will become clearer in years to come because since the universities and colleges admissions services (UCAS) announced that they will no longer request people with criminal convictions to disclose any that are 'unspent' (UCAS, 2018), the spotlight will now be on how universities intend to move forward with their admissions policies in relation to dealing with applicants with criminal convictions. Despite these positive steps made by UCAS, will universities follow suit? Some will most certainly resist because there is an underlying punitive approach by some universities towards people with convictions which has been further investigated by the Prisoners' Education Trust, the Longford Trust and Unlock (2017) and continues to be a bone of contention. However, encouragingly the University of Westminster has recently announced that they will no longer routinely request information of applicant's previous criminal convictions (see University of Westminster, 2018).

Taking into account these arguments then, where does this leave the future of prison education and continuing education opportunities for people with convictions? The answer could be found within the data of this study whereby the transformative elements of education (Pike, 2014; Darke & Aresti, 2016) enabled the participants to develop greater social skills but moreover the confidence and self esteem to create life chances (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2015).

Several prison education studies have helped further the argument that education enables transformations, such as Anne Pike's (2014) study of 'higher level' prison learners, whereby education and identity transformation were significant themes with 'participants developing student identities and becoming part of a wider community of learners which helped them replace their prisoner identities' (p.184). There was also Bilby et al's (2013) study of 'exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance' and Meek, Champion & Klier's (2012) sports based study of 'How sports-based learning can help prisoners engage in education, gain employment and desist from crime'. But the constant focus of prison education reducing re-offending shares the same limitations as desistance studies with a narrow focus on how it can help individuals lead law abiding lives and therefore overlooks the importance of identity transformation (Maruna, 2001). This was identified in the 'Brain Cells' (2014) survey by the Prisoners' Education Trust, which found that prison education under the current Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) is focused heavily on vocational qualifications because education is viewed as leading to employment which reduces the risk of re-offending. This is not to say that vocational focussed education is not essential but the transformative elements of education are equally essential because this will make individuals more likely to hold down employment and build stronger social bonds (Laub & Sampson, 2001). Speaking about the transformative benefits of higher education, Tucker (2009) argues that for someone to hold down employment, they require social skills such as knowing how to negotiate conflicts with co-workers and bosses and presenting oneself appropriately which are abilities that derive from their identities as fellow-workers.

There have been some positive outcomes in relation to prison education which the PLA (2015) highlighted in relation to the commitment of OLASS providing a seamless process aligning prison education provision with education providers in

the community focus on providing accredited employment-related qualifications. There has also been a positive focus on training prisoners to become peer mentors which for some of the participants in this study was an essential identity transformation whereby they were given responsibilities as peer mentors and which has led to them finding employment in the caring profession. But the Prisoner Learning Alliance argue: 'there is no incentive to convert prisoners who have completed peer mentoring courses into active mentor roles. Peer mentoring is an important way to engage 'hard to reach' learners and to support learners in their studies' (p.6), and as this study demonstrates many of the participants have continued to become valued peer mentors in their roles as counsellors and advisors (Brown, 1991, Maruna, 2001).

The Prisoner Learning Alliance (2015) argued that the OLASS contracts could be made to work better to produce the rehabilitation outcomes for prisoners but three years since this report they are set to end in this year (2018) making way for a new era of prison governor-led education commissioning whereby prisons are being given increasing flexibility and control over education budgets and the ability to commission a wide range of provision. But in 2017, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Peter Clarke, criticised governors for not giving sufficient priority to education and training, allowing other activities to interrupt the working day (see HM Prisons Inspectors annual report, 2017/18).

This could be of concern when considering the control of prison education budgets are being handed over to governors. The current system is not ideal for the reasons stated above but if governors are not going to be completely on board then prison education will continue to decline, but in relation to prison to college programmes prison governors are completely on board which is one of the reasons why they are so successful. Therefore the future of prison education is in the hands of prison governors who must be vigilant of the potential diversity between prison education and prison to college programmes and of the university hidden agenda.

Therefore in relation to the desistance and transformation of self dichotomy argument, one of main factors that polarises desistance from the transformation of self can be seen within the UK prison to college collaborations where despite prisoners succeeding on these programmes, they are not guaranteed a place at

university before leaving prison or even after leaving prison. Yet this has already been successfully achieved in the US by Professor Baz Dreisinger's Prison to college pipeline programme (John Clay College of Criminal Justice, 2016). In other words, although prison to college learning enables desistance (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2015; Darke & Aresti, 2016), it does not necessarily enable a continuation of education. The reasons for this could be situated within the earlier discussion about discriminative university admissions policies but as suggested, this is something that requires further investigation (see Prisoners' Education Trust, 2017). That said, there has been some progress around bridging this gap, for example, it is something that Darke & Aresti (2016) are keen to implement within their programme that currently runs in collaboration with the University of Westminster and HMP Pentonville. Also, Coates (2016) remarks on how HMP Springhill has built a relationship with the nearby Oxford Brookes University to enable prison learners to attend higher education courses on day release, and then to continue with their studies there on release.

However, overall this is not forthcoming and so if it is difficult for 'inside' learners who have successfully achieved accreditation through a prison to college programme to enter university, then what chance do ex-prisoners have who have not been part of such a programme? One would expect that being part of a prison to college programme would enable a rite of passage (see chapter 6), but as we can see, this is not the case. The participants in this study did all successfully enter higher education without the framework of a prison to college programme which had not been introduced during their time in prison, but for many of them, their past convictions were irrelevant because of the passage of time where they had become 'spent' (see Unlock, 2018). Some however, did experience difficulties from university admission departments so it would seem that there is no clear distinction between the experiences of the prison to college learners to those who have gone through more traditional routes. What this does highlight though is that the discriminative admissions policies of universities are more punitive than perhaps thought, but because all the participants in this study had entered university through their own efforts, a comparative study of those who have gone to university from the prison to college programmes is worthy of further study.

These discriminative procedures align with the Coates (2016) report which found that ex-prisoners are often made to feel excluded, discriminated against and under the spotlight by universities when asked to meet with panels to discuss their convictions. Therefore, there is an argument here that educational needs extend far beyond those of prisoners and ex-prisoners but also to those who are at the frontline of dealing with university applicants with criminal convictions. Dame Sally Coates (2016) recognised this noting that one of the major barriers for prisoners continuing education after release from prison is the safeguarding and risk assessment practice of universities and other education providers:

‘I have heard from many ex-prisoners of the difficulties they have had in continuing their education at further and higher education levels because their application for a place to study is turned down on the grounds of the risk they pose, without a clear justification being offered, or the right to a face-to-face appeal’ (p.55).

Coates argues that education in prison should give individuals the skills they need to unlock their potential, gain employment, and become assets to their communities. It is one of the pillars of effective rehabilitation. Education should build social capital and improve the well-being of prisoners during their sentences because as we have seen in Pike’s (2014) study, many of those in her sample who tried continuing their education after release led chaotic lives not least influenced by poor accommodation such as probation hostels and bed and breakfast lodgings. And it is Pike’s point here which highlights the absence of social capital for desisters which include an individual’s basic needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954) such as stable accommodation, employment opportunities and support.

This study found that although education has powerful transformative benefits, education alone is not sufficient for a progressive transformation of self. Pike(2014) showed that despite her sample developing resilience through education to overcome barriers, many returned to prison because of stigma and discrimination (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2015) which clearly demonstrates the importance of outside support of newly released prisoners but there is also a strong argument that the transformative benefits that education allowed, gave individuals more resilience to deal with negative experiences (McAdams, 2006).

In summary, it could be argued that despite the consensus around the transformative benefits of education (Darke & Aresti, 2016; Armstrong &

Ludlow, 2015) and the need to support prisoners after release, there still exists a judgemental culture of distrust towards people with convictions (see Prisoners' Education Trust, 2017). At the time of writing in 2018, there has been considerable progression with the prison to college programmes with over 120 collaborations between prisons and universities, but as yet, we do not have any data of how many ex-prisoners are going on to university afterwards. But as mentioned earlier a comparative study to this one could demonstrate if there is any distinction between the experiences of ex-prisoners who have been part of a prison to college programme to those who have not been part of a prison to college programme applying to study at university. Furthermore it could highlight much more than these comparisons such as whether the transition and experience of university for prison to college learners is easier having experienced studying alongside university students.

This experience enables a breaking down of barriers therefore perhaps this makes the university experience much easier for these learners than say those who have not been part of a programme. But despite the success of these collaborations, where does this leave standard prison education? The positive attitudes by prisons that has been seen towards prison to college partnerships must be extended to all other areas of prison life including more educational opportunities, but moreover, a culture that embraces education, desistance, rehabilitation and post-prison support.

Even if this was achieved though, how can it bridge the gap beyond the prison gates? (Aresti et al. 2016; Duguid & Pawson, 1998). This study found many disparities between prison and universities whereby prisoners achieved a great deal while serving their sentences but encountered discriminative procedures by universities towards those with criminal convictions which also corresponds with Pike's (2014) study and the Coates (2016) report. And though UCAS (2018) has now changed its policy on requesting criminal convictions on application forms, it is in my view that there will be further issues as universities will now have to decide how they are to handle applicants with criminal records in the future. Although one cannot contest that safeguarding practices are essential, universities have to balance the need for inclusion for all but also the safety of their students

which is why it is imperative for universities to develop new guidelines and training strategies.

The purpose of prison education is also somewhat debateable because it has always been regarded by the authorities as being most importantly geared towards gaining employment. More recently it become included in the desistance literature, but both views are focussed on reducing the risk of re-offending rather than the transformative benefits relating to education (Darke & Aresti, 2016), but such a narrow focus that tends to miss the wider transformative benefits of education and in particular higher education.

It is difficult to see where prison education will lead in the near future with the prison system being in crisis with increasing self-harm, suicides and violence and at the same time a reduction of prison staff managing increasing numbers of prisoners (see Howard League of Penal Reform, 2018). Access to prison education is declining with access to funding becoming more difficult but perhaps with prison governors now being given control over budgets to prison education, we may see improvement. But even with the best of intentions, prison education will never be priority while other issues in the prison system continue to cause problems. Despite this though, prison to college programmes continue to flourish, however there must be caution about the motivations of universities and not for these programmes to become part of their managerialist approach towards targets and impact (Armstrong, 2018).

1.5 An overview of the chapters

In order to provide the context for this study outlined in chapter 2, several theories pertaining to the transformation of self, provide a framework which begin with the participants experiencing an existential crisis during their time in prison where isolation caused by the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) impacts on their sense of selves and forces them to change. For most individuals, it is essential to them how they are viewed by others which is discussed using Cooley's (1902) 'looking glass self' concept that argues how our selves are reflected to us by others and how we view our selves subjectively. Additionally, McNeill's (2016)

more contemporary concept of tertiary desistance is used as a conceptual framework to analyse the transition towards conventional society.

The ‘social theories of the self’ in chapter 2, contribute towards developing a psychosocial model of the self which begins with narrative criminology and desistance and how prisoner and ex-prisoner biographies which were once regarded as nothing more than sources of entertainment in popular culture have slowly began to merge into mainstream criminology (see Presser, 2009; Presser & Sandberg, 2015; Maruna, 2001). It is through this essential contribution of narrative criminology that a psychosocial model of the self is cemented through explaining a series of existential crises that individuals experience during difficult times of their lives. It also introduces the concept of existential sociology which combines symbolic interactionism and existentialism (Kotarba & Fontana, 1984) and how researchers and participants share their lived experiences through narrative. It discusses the psychosocial trajectories that individuals experience during their lifetime through Erikson’s (1959) life span model and Maslow’s (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs which offer sociological and psychological perspectives of how individuals continually strive towards achieving their best self.

Examining ‘components of existentialism’ (Buténaité et al., 2016) give an overview of the main crises of the self that are experienced by individuals during difficult times of their lives. It also introduces the concept of existential sociology which combines symbolic interactionism and existentialism (Kotarba & Fontana, 1984). The tensions that are experienced during a life span is examined through two psychosocial models including Erikson’s (1959) life span model and Maslow’s (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs which together offer sociological and psychological perspectives of individual’s life transitions. The perspectives on desistance are discussed in relation to their connectedness within other theories that underpin this study but also where the limitations are and how they diverge. Additionally, social structures are discussed in relation to concepts of the many paradoxes associated with total institutions and how contrasting theories (Scott, 2015) provide a paradox of this area of discussion but also how the institutional habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) continues to subdue the very lifeline within institutions, in respect of this study, namely prisons and universities. The insitutional habitus also links with the divided self and Bourdieu’s less known,

habitus clive which offers and insight into how the instituional habitus can stifle individual's trajectories and upward social mobility through this splitting of habituses (Bourdieu, 2004).

In Chapter 3 - 'methodology' I outline my approach to the research methods which focusses on the participant's cognitive transformations as a method of moving away from offending (Gadd & Farrall, 2004). I used this approach as I felt this study was able to explore the limitations within desistance theories by examining the participant's ongoing self-transformations including the inner conflicts they experience that continue long after offending has ceased. I begin by outlining my ontological and epistemological position and how the research question shifted when the focus of my study changed (King & Horrocks, 2010). Moreover, how my insider/outsider position created tensions as my sense of self became as much an analysis as the participants through our shared, lived experiences. I discuss the sampling process and recruitment criteria, followed by the interviewing process; my research topics and the ethical considerations that were involved before the interviews could be conducted due to the sensitivity of the study. I outline the data analysis which details the emergent and extant themes from my findings and the conceptual frameworks that I used to analyse my data. Finally, I give a brief overview of each of the 24 participants biographies.

Chapter 4 - the first findings chapter – 'crisis and equilibrium' begins to develop a psychosocial model of the self by analysing the participant's transformations. Existentialism is a 'framework' to make sense of the respondent's experiences and therefore, begins with an analysis of how they encounter an existentialist crisis caused by the isolation of imprisonment and how this leads them to forge new identities (Aresti et al., 2010). It analyses how the participants go through a process of overcoming the fear of being sent to prison to how they later see prison as a time and place to embark on a programme of education and develop new identities as prisoner learners, mentors and educators (see Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2015). It advances an argument about the purpose of prison, positing that for some, prison can offer opportunities by virtue of structure, routine and an escape from chaotic lifestyles (Pike, 2014). It highlights how some prisoners negotiate their identities in relation to their sexualities and how this impacted on their experience of prison. It discusses how prisoners begin to transform their identities through prison education and develop a privileged prisoner 'status'

which transformed their sense of selves. The construction of identities in open prisons demonstrates how these prisons are geared towards resettlement which offers prisoners more opportunities to desist (Aresti & Darke, 2015). The conflicted self, highlights the ongoing difficulties of the transforming 'self' and how despite the participants being able to overcome their existential crises in prison, they continue to face inner conflict. The participant's existential crisis is explained as a trigger point to a period of self-discovery and re-evaluation and how this begins a psychosocial process.

Chapter 5 - 'Narratives of liminality', the ex-offender label and liminality will examine how the participants begin to negotiate their identities as ex-prisoners/offenders and how their attempts to develop new identities have been hindered by 'othering' and stigmatisation (Goffman, 1963, Armstrong & Ludlow, 2015) and thus creating a lengthy phase of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014). This chapter further develops its psychosocial model of the self by analysing how the participants begin to negotiate their identities through a reciprocal dialogue with myself. The term 'negotiating' identifies the existential process of individuals consciously reflecting on, and re-evaluating their own identities and taking control of their existence. It discusses how this impacts on how they view their 'selves'; how they feel others view them and how they wish others to view them (Cooley, 1902; McNeill, 2016).

Chapter 6 – 'The pains of desistance' further makes links between liminality and the paradox of the psychosocial process which happen during 'occasions of significant transition, passage or disruption' (Stenner, 2017, p. 14). The desistance process can be described in this way which is generally presented in a positive light with themes of 'making good' and generativity (Erikson, 1959). But this chapter also draws attention to the painful experiences of desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) which parallels Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment. In doing so, this chapter will use Nugent & Schinkel's (2016) pains of desistance as a conceptual framework by examining the complexities and flaws within the transformative process of the desistance process which Nugent & Schinkel argue are attributed within previous studies as being linked to substance misuse, lack of housing, difficulties in finding employment and the individual's lack of motivation or their inability to achieve status or respect in a legitimate way (Farrall, 2002; Giordano et al., 2002; Healy, 2010, 2014). Additionally, this

chapter will show that for some, higher education was also an internally painful experience because it invoked further insight into their traumatic pasts and despite the socioeconomic benefits of education how upward social mobility can create further tensions because of the impact it has on a person's habitus where it splits the self and creates tensions that become an ongoing conflict (Bourdieu, 1984, 2000).

Finally, in chapter 7 - 'Conclusions' I review the claims to new knowledge which this thesis makes, summarising its implications for practice and for further research and I critically evaluate the limitations to these claims.

Chapter 2: Reviewing the field

2.1 Introduction

This review foregrounds the key theories that are central to the transformation of self and underpin the psychosocial process including their interconnectedness and divergence. At the core of each theory is an emphasis on narrative and the importance of both positive and negative accounts from the desisters' life course experiences which include redemptive scripts (Maruna, 2001) as individuals reflect on giving back, but also reliving painful experiences as a way of self-healing (Frank, 1995) and making sense of how they have been shaped. This advocates the importance of sharing both painful narratives (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016; McAdams, 2006) as well as positive narratives in order to understand the whole transformative process.

Farrall (2005) analyses this through the lens of existential-sociology (Kotarba & Fontana, 1984) in his study *On the Existential Aspects of Desistance from Crime* which examines reciprocal narratives between researchers and participants who share the same lived experiences. These mutual dialogues invoke existential emotions where they recount crises of the self that lead to lengthy periods of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014), but also catalysts towards change (Giordano et al. 2002). This psychosocial process can be seen in Erikson's (1959) life span model and Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs which demonstrate how individuals continually strive towards achieving their best self.

These transformations are seen within several symbolic interactionist theories which are a major contribution towards studies of human interaction and behaviours such as Cooley's (1902) 'looking glass self' concept where individuals see themselves through the eyes of others; Mead's (1934) theoretical position which observes how human beings act toward things in relation to their symbolic meanings and Blumer's (1986) position that all social interaction rests in the process of representing ourselves to ourselves. This can be further understood through Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, the *presentation of self*

where he saw a connection between how people perform in their daily lives and theatrical performances which he explains using theatre metaphors. Becker's (1963) labelling theory further discusses how identities are socially constructed through the 'othering' (Braithwaite, 1989) of so-called deviants and how labels become attached which sometimes lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). Each of the theories outlined above are linked to 'perspectives of desistance' which as a rendezvous discipline has no single theory itself but instead draws on other disciplines to develop various concepts.

The concept of total institutions foregrounds a discussion around the sociology of institutions beginning with Goffman's (1961) analysis of human interaction, stripping of identities and the 'mortification of self'. Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment extends Goffman's concept of identity loss caused by deprivations of the self while Scott (2015) contrasts the total institution concept through her notion of reinventive institutions. However, the institutional habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) concept offers further discussion about the embedded, historical biographies that remain within all institutions and which impact on an individual's sense of self and their cultures. Additionally, the divided self is discussed whereby upward social mobility impacts on an individual's habitus causing a habitus split (or habitus clive) created by institutional habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 2004). Finally, this chapter will conclude this review by discussing how each of the theoretical positions discussed contribute towards the development of a psychosocial model of the self not only through their links to each other but also how they diversify.

2.2 Narrative criminology and desistance

Until recently, the narratives of those with first hand experiences of the criminal justice system were only viewed as sources of entertainment through popular culture which included autobiographies and movies and yet some of these biographies have included important links to prison reform, education and academic research. In one of the most compelling accounts of 'making good' (Maruna, 2001) former bank robber John McVicar wrote an extensive account of his criminal past and transition through higher education while serving a 23-year prison sentence in the 1970s.

McVicar was later propelled from public enemy number one to gaining a first-class honours degree in sociology to becoming a postgraduate and later journalist. And in Cohen & Taylor's (1981) second edition of the *Psychological Survival of long term imprisonment* (first published in 1972) McVicar recounts his participation in Cohen and Taylor's study and how their sociological teachings in Durham prison where McVicar was at the time, led to his fascination for the subject. Tucker (2009) argues that McVicar's example of a transforming life raises important questions about common understandings of educational programs in prisons and about prisoners' criminal master status (see Lemert, 1951). McVicar enrolled in a college program out of boredom and describes his personal change as an "unintended consequence" of pursuing a degree.

Another influential narrative was written by Jimmy Boyle, a Glaswegian born gangster who while in Barlinnie jail in 1976 wrote his life story *A Sense of Freedom* (1977) which has since become a bestseller, film and 40 years later, reprinted as a classic of prison literature (Campbell, 2016). Furthermore, Boyle became a world-renowned sculptor, a craft he learned during his time in prison. Yet such accounts of compelling transformations by former criminals who at one time were deemed enemies of the state and imprisoned for decades, have only just begun to surface within academic literature and can now be seen in university reading lists for criminology students. For too long the voices of prisoners and ex-prisoners have been silenced in relation to academic research which here Bennett and Crewe (2012) capture:

"Little of what we know about prison comes from the mouths of prisoners, and very few academic accounts of prison life manage to convey some of its most profound and important features: its daily pressures and frustrations, the culture of the wings and landings, and the relationships which shape the everyday experience of being imprisoned" (Bennett & Crewe, 2012: ii).

The above extract from Bennett & Crewe refers to prisoners but it can be translated to desisters whose voices about the daily pressures, frustrations and relationships which shape the everyday experience of trying to make it on the outside are rarely heard. But influential narrative studies such as Maruna's 'making good' (2001) and Vaughan's (2006) 'internal narrative of desistance' to name a few, have brought the ex-prisoner narrative firmly under the academic spotlight, not least influenced by the formation of the Convict Criminologist

Organisation which as outlined in chapter 5, has become influential in combining first-hand experiences of the criminal justice system with academic research (see chapter 5, section, 5.4). But this body of work known as narrative criminology was widely developed mainly by Lois Presser (2009) beginning with her article *The Narratives of Offenders* which has since received international attention and is now central to the Nordic Research Network (see Presser & Sandberg, 2015).

The ‘making good’ narrative has become an important feature within desistance studies which highlight the value of the lived experience such as in Maruna’s Liverpool study where his sample claim a higher purpose for their redemption - a reason to make good and ‘fight the good fight’ which many desisters go through working within generative roles as counsellors and advisors (see chapter 6, section 6.4). Therefore, narrative is not just an essential methodological tool for research but also a way desisters can make amends through a ‘redemptive script’ as ‘wounded healers’ (Maruna, 2001, p.102). Desisters are well positioned for this kind of work because of their shared lived experiences of substance abuse which is why many choose to work in these professions. This resonates with Arthur Frank’s (1995) wounded storyteller which is further discussed in chapter 6 about personal accounts of health struggles with mental health issues, substance abuse, and alcohol all of which are common themes within desistance studies.

The wounded narrative replaces the ‘criminal’ identity for many desisters who do not view themselves as criminals but rather drug users who want to help others with the same problems. In Colman & Vander Laenen’s (2012) study of recovering drug addicts, the participants viewed themselves as drug users rather than criminals which is additionally supported by Albertson et al’s (2015) study of military veterans involved in drug use which shows that desistance involves much more than moving away from crime but rather a whole set of social interactions and transitions. For the wounded healers, these transitions involve making amends through self-redemption while helping others to reform and improve their lives.

The ‘real me’ also becomes a powerful narrative throughout the desistance literature whereby individuals describe their renewed pro-social identities as the person they always were. This was such a dominant narrative in Maruna’s study where his sample consistently referred to themselves as the ‘real me’ that he devoted a chapter titled ‘the real me’, but whatever term desisters use to describe

their true self, this is a recurring theme throughout the desistance literature (see also Stevens, 2011). Maruna's 'Making Good' approach was influenced by the work of Dan McAdams (1988, 1997, 2006), where he employs narrative identity theory to explore the process of identity reconstruction through which repeat offenders reform and go on to lead social and productive lives. But it is not just the 'making good' narrative and the 'redemptive script' that is essential in transformation of self, but also the painful narrative according to McAdams (2006) who argues that life's lessons are learned through tragedy and painful experiences because they can ground certain individuals and change them for the better. He argues that painful experiences can bring people closer together where people often share profound memories of intimacy in their lives as times when they shared with others deep sadness and pain. Painful experiences are clearly as beneficial as positive experiences because they often lead to existential crises that force self-change (see chapter 6). On this note, McAdams claims that the importance of the tragic narrative is a way of developing an understanding of self-transformations because anguish arises from knowing that you are alone and have to make decisions for yourself which becomes a powerful narrative in relation to existential crises and imprisonment (see chapter 4). But equally, revisiting painful memories enable individuals to make sense of where they went wrong and how their bad experiences were meant to happen for them to find that real person (Maruna, 2001; Stevens, 2011). And as Nugent & Schinkel (2016) assert, it is just as important to draw on these painful experiences through narrative because as Stone (2016, p.957) rightly argues, 'narrative theory of desistance is fundamentally one of "narrative repair" of spoiled or stigmatized identities'.

Nugent & Schinkel's (2016) recent work on the pains of desistance links the painful narrative directly to the difficult experiences that desisters encounter as they attempt to reintegrate into society. Though this may introduce a gloomier perspective of the desistance experience, it is an essential psychosocial lens which provides us with a more holistic view of desistance by drawing on existentialism (Farrall, 2005), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

Even within an oppressive environment such as prison, more recent studies have identified how imprisonment can prompt narratives of transformation and also be

used as a strategy by individuals to make sense of their imprisonment and their desired future (Schinkel, 2015). Desistance in relation to imprisonment in academic studies is a new concept (Schinkel & McNeill 2016) because previous studies only ever associated imprisonment with painful experiences which include deprivations and loss of self-identity (Sykes, 1958; Goffman, 1961). Yet as previous studies and as this study demonstrates, the experience of prison can and does lead to positive self-change (Schinkel, 2015; McNeill & Schinkel, 2016; McLean et al., 2017).

From being regarded as sources of entertainment we can now see a shift in attitudes towards the importance of first hand perspectives whereby former prisoners turned academics have found their place within academic literature where they are able to use their first-hand experiences but also project themselves as academic scholars within their own right (see chapter 5). Narration is at the crux of the psychosocial process that pieces together individual's life stories, for example, as discussed in chapter 2, the core of the symbolic interactionist approach is language which involves interaction between individuals. And therefore, it is essential to develop a symbolic interactionist approach within narrative desistance studies which was the basis of Giordano et al's. (2002) cognitive transformation study on desistance. Previous desistance studies have argued the importance of understanding how and why individuals move away from criminal activity through its correlation to external factors (Sampson & Laub, 1993) (see chapter 2) but narrative criminology has given credence to the importance of engaging in dialogue with ex-offenders to understand internal factors. Giordano et al. (2002) use life histories and see a narrative approach as being useful in providing an intimate perspective on the method individuals use to explain how their lives have progressed and shaped and to provide hooks to help inform us of what they feel. This is essential as it reflects and stimulates a set of cognitive representations: 'Linguistic and cognitive hooks are important to consider, for as Mead (1964) suggested, together they can serve as an organizing process that actually helps to push along the changes' (Giordano et al. 2002, p.1000).

2.3 Existential crises of the self

Existentialist crises foreground the psychosocial model that is developed within this study and underpins the essence of the argument that the transformation of self is unending (Butenaite et al. 2016; Wade, 1998). The transformation of self is unending because of recurrent existential crises where individuals are continually seeking to understand the personal crises, self-change, identity shifts and the subjective feelings that self-transformation entails (Erikson, 1959; Maslow, 1943, 1954). Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) habitus which is determined through biographical dispositions through class and culture also contributes to the unending transformation of self and therefore, Bourdieu's habitus is in essence, an existential perspective which provides an additional and powerful argument of the unending transformation of self.

Existential emotions lead individuals to self reflect and make life changing decisions which is why existentialism resonates with desistance (Farrall, 2005) and the transformation of self. Farrall & Calverley (2006) identified existentialist themes within several desistance studies such as Cusson & Pinsonneault's (1986) study which claims that some ex-prisoner's decisions to give up crime is triggered by some sort of shock - a 'delayed deterrence' - which leads them to embark upon a process of re-valuating their sense of selves (p.73). Farrall (2005, p.373) also links existential-sociology to previous desistance studies, for example: 'Shover's study (1983) on changes in goals, "tiredness," and the impact these processes have on self-identity; Bull's 1972 work (cited in Shover 1983) on feelings of despair and the motivation to change; and Meisenhelder's investigation (1977, 1982) of an individual's use of social locales to reinforce the projection of a new personal identity. Maruna (2001) shows that while catalysts for change were external to the individual, desistance was reported as an internal process which enabled the "real me" to emerge. Many of these commentators have been following a research agenda, without explicitly referring to it, that mirrors many of the concerns associated with existential sociology'.

The common denominator here is the 'decision' to make self-changes against adversity which Crewe & Lippens (2009) argue are existential motivations that were identified in early criminology texts such as Matza's (1964) *Becoming Deviant* (Matza, 1969) and *Delinquency and Drift* (Matza, 1964). The emphasis

on doing something to change is resonated within Matza's (1969) existential approach of 'becoming deviant' which can be applied to desistance through a reversal perspective of individuals 'negotiating' their identities (see chapter 5).

Despite existentialism being rarely acknowledged in criminology, it is practically non-existent within prison literature yet for some individuals, the prison environment invokes the most powerful existential emotions that lead to self-change (Aresti et al., 2010; McNeill & Schinkel, 2016). We shall see later in chapter 4 how concepts such as Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment and Goffman's (1961) total institutions involving deprivations, loss of identities and self-autonomy are in complete contrast to the notion of prison invoking self-change but also contribute to understanding why incarceration forces individuals to experience existential crises of the self in the first instance. This is reminiscent of existential-sociology studies by Manning (1973) and Fontana (1984) who explain that 'existential-sociology is the sociology that attempts to study human beings in their natural setting - the everyday world in which they live - and to examine as many as possible of the complex facets of the human experience' (Fontana, 1984, p.4). Existential experiences and self-change within the prison environment is an example of complex facets of human experience because of their unlikely combination.

Another complex facet within existential-sociology is the link between the shared lived experience between the researcher and participant which Farrall (2005) identifies in previous existential-sociology studies which fulfil the important role of existentialism in social sciences. They highlight how battered women experience the victimization of battering, and then how they negotiate the social identity of a battered woman. Other studies include empirical research of how ex-nuns experience the transformation of their self when they leave the convent (Ebaugh, 1984), how individuals experience giving blood to blood banks, how individuals experience and develop a homosexual 'self' and identity (Warren & Ponce, 1977) and how wheelchair runners define their selves (Wickman, 2007). Moreover, these examples highlight the existential experiences of reciprocal interviews between researchers and participants and how researchers position themselves within their studies (Kotarba & Fontana, 1984).

Individuals search for meaning through their changing identities, formation of new relationships and what existentialists refer to as 'essence' which gives them purpose. Education for example may be regarded as the answer to a successful transformation of self but this can only become real once the existentialist has discovered it rather than others forcing this idea upon them. This is much the same as desistance which is something that cannot be forced on an individual but rather an experience invoked through self reflection and cognitive transformation (Giordano et al. 2002). Lester (1984, p.58) explains that it is 'of particular importance' in existential sociology, 'the experience of conflicting emotions and how these are resolved (or not), and the impact that this has on the subject's identity' (as cited in Farrall & Calverley, 2006, p.81). It is questionable though whether the experience of conflicting emotions are ever resolved because of oppressiveness caused by stigmatisation and othering (Brathwaite, 1989) which contribute to the continual experiences of liminality (Healy, 2012, 2014).

Existentialism provides a useful lens through which to study the difficulties that individuals experience during the psychosocial transition, but also how these experiences enable them to strengthen their resilience (McAdams, 2006). How individuals negotiate these emotions that constitute existential crises is put forward by Buténaité et al (2016) which include emotional pain; despair and helplessness; disturbed sense of integrity; emotional vulnerability; guilt, fear and anxiety; and loneliness. Buténaité and colleagues argue that 'it is important for psychologists and psychotherapists working with people experiencing different difficulties to understand their experiences of existential crisis' (p.9). This is something that can also be translated to sociologists and criminologists researching desistance but also practitioners within the criminal justice system including probation officers, social workers and prison staff.

Buténaité et al's (2016) following examples of existential crises are certainly experiences that recur throughout an individual's entire life span (Erikson, 1959) and therefore this study aims to translate these experiences in relation to desistance and the transformation of self. And through differentiating existential components this provides a basis from where to begin a psychosocial model of the self. The existential crises that Buténaité and colleagues discuss mirror the same experiences reported by desisters such as emotional pain, despair, helplessness, disturbed sense of integrity, emotional vulnerability, guilt, fear, anxiety and

loneliness (see also Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). The cognitive component includes a loss of meaning and goals, realisation of own end, loss of personal values, and decision-making. The behavioural component is characterised by restraining actions, rituals, relationship loss, health problems, addictions, anti-social behaviour and the need for therapy. Each of the six components below are specifically translated to desistance and the transformation of self.

1. **Emotional pain** is one of the fundamental aspects of existence and according to McAdam's (2006) necessary for the development to become stronger individuals. It is something that Nugent & Schinkel (2016) have linked to the desistance process and as McAdam's argues, an important aspect whereby sharing emotional pain with others unites us and brings individuals closer together. For desisters, emotional pain is most heightened during imprisonment and it is at this stage they are forced to make changes to their lives and to overcome the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) which for many desisters is the starting point of their transition.
2. **Despair and helplessness** are also aspects of an existential crisis. In the present moment, a person is experiencing struggle of opposites between freedom and dependence, which causes inner-pervasive despair (Kierkegaard, 1997). The desister experiences this as they attempt to re-integrate while at the same time they crave the structural stability of the prison environment. For many of those released from prison, the loss of this stability can be catastrophic and therefore it is essential that there is a bridge of support.
3. **Disturbed sense of integrity** is when a person is touched by despair manifestations, fragmentation, dispersal, loss of balance and unity and can be again situated within the prison environment and post prison. Aresti et al. (2010) refer to existential crises as 'defining moments' (p.114) when individuals faced with identity crises, insecurities, self-abandonment, alienation, and isolation who then become motivated to make self-changes.
4. **Emotional vulnerability** is at the core of the prisoner's existence and the desistance process where they experience a wide range of emotions and a loss of feeling control. Buténaité et al (2016) assert that the sense of deficiency and meaninglessness experienced during an existential crisis are associated with

fear, anger, shame, sadness. These emotional experiences can be associated with desisters narratives where they recount feelings of fear during their childhoods, home life with the experiences of domestic violence, their time in prison. Some feel shame about their offending and the shame they have brought on their family and friends but also anger about how wider society make their transitions difficult and keep creating barriers which as this study demonstrates an ongoing sadness.

5. **Guilt, fear and anxiety** can take away the meaning of life, but at the same time, it can be an opportunity to grow and become a better person (McAdams, 2006). Guilt is a major narrative within the criminal justice system and one that not always comes easy but for many prisoners is essential for early release. Guilt often comes later within the desistance process and is something that many individuals struggle with psychologically but is an essential process of desistance for an individual to change their cognitive perception of their offending behaviour (Giordano et al. 2002).
6. **Loneliness** can be catastrophic and sometimes is a major factor for desisters and in particular those who have been convicted of sex offences whereby they become ostracised by society. Prisoners experience loneliness within the confinement of the prison environment being isolated from the outside world, family and friends. But for many, loneliness is something they have become accustomed to throughout their lives from being abandoned as children to school exclusion (see Graham, 2014) and imprisonment. Thus, 'loneliness is an aspect of existential crisis that not only enhances personal isolation but also helps understand relationships from a completely new perspective' (Buténaitè et al., 2016, p.15).

These existential components demonstrate how they can be translated to desistance but also various disciplines such as psychology, sociology and criminology. They provide several components of existential crises which can lead to positive change such as strengthening resilience and overcoming anxieties that accompany human responsibility, independence, freedom, issues of purpose and commitment.

2.4 The psychosocial life span theory

The life span theory sets the stage for the psychosocial process and how the consequences of not meeting developmental challenges include stagnation (Healy, 2010, 2014) and emotional despair (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). In particular this review is interested in how the life span psychosocial theory mediates the relationship between desistance and the transformation of self. The psychosocial process begins with an existential crises (Butentaite et al. 2016) which as discussed in the previous section, is something that recurs over a lifetime, but previous psychosocial models emphasise progressive patterns and sequences that make them difficult to translate to the desistance journey or the transformation of self of ex-offenders. For example, an individual who spends several years moving away from crime and their former associates may still relapse and re-offend (Weaver & McNeill, 2007) but later restart their desistance journey and therefore, transitions do not always follow a systematic process.

The psychosocial model that has been developed in this study was influenced by two life span theories, namely Erikson's (1959) psychosocial development theory and Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs which both contribute an essential lens through which analyse the transformation of self. Erikson included five stages of his life span theory up to the age of 18 and three further stages beyond, into adulthood. He also suggests that there is still room for continued growth and development throughout one's life and puts a great deal of emphasis on the adolescent period, feeling it was a crucial stage for developing a person's identity. Here Erikson's eight stages are described by (O'Hara, et al., 2016, p. 44).

1. **Infancy** - *trust vs. mistrust*
Infants develop trust with secure caregiver relationships when their basic needs are met. If physical and emotional needs are not met, the child may develop a mistrusting attitude toward others.
2. **Early childhood** - *autonomy vs. shame*
From about ages 1 to 3 years children explore the world and experiment. If parents or caregivers do not promote autonomy, children may lack self-reliance as they develop.
3. **Preschool age** - *initiative vs. guilt*
Between ages 3 and 6, the focus is a basic sense of competence. If others monopolize decision making on behalf of these children, then they become guilty and reluctant to make their own decisions.

4. **School age** - *industry vs. inferiority*
With children ages 6-12, the focus is on goal-setting and achievement. Without success at this task, feelings of inadequacy may develop.
5. **Adolescence** - *identity vs. role confusion*
During adolescence and puberty, individuals explore limits, boundaries, meaning, identity and goals. Failure to achieve a coherent identity may yield confusion.
6. **Young adulthood** - *intimacy vs. isolation*
For individuals ages 18 to 35, the major task is the development of and security within intimate relationships. Without these, alienation and isolations may persist.
7. **Middle age** - *generativity vs. stagnation*
With adults ages 35 to 60, the focus is on transcending self and family and focussing on the next generation. People in this stage must reconcile differences between their aspirations/dreams and their actual accomplishments.
8. **Later life** - *integrity vs. despair*
For those over 60, this stage deals with coming to terms with one's life. People look back either with a sense of pride and contentment, or perhaps with feelings of failure, guilt and despair.

O'Hara, et al's (2016) explanations offer a clear and concise summary of Erikson's (1959) stages and interestingly, Erikson assumes that a crisis occurs at each stage of development which could be applied to the existential crises reported by desisters throughout their journeys. Failure to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages which leads to periods of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014). Another important contribution to the psychosocial model came almost 40 years after Erikson's life span model from his wife, Joan Erikson who completed the life cycle with a ninth stage (1997). This additional stage to Erik Erikson's eight stages include old age beginning at the age of 65 and ending with death. During this stage the individual struggles with integrity versus despair and is a time when many engage in a life review to consider the worth of their experiences. Out of this life review the elder person arrives at either a sense of integrity that may lead to wisdom or to despair. This becomes an important point in relation to studies of older prisoners and their later resettlement but as Chu (2016) argues, there is very little known about older prisoners and their views about their futures, release and reintegration into the community. Crawley and Sparks (2006) who studied prisoners over 65 found that they generally held pessimistic views about the future and drawing from Erikson's (1959) life span model, argued that 'Perhaps unsurprisingly, a positive evaluation

is thought to enable us to deal positively with death; a negative evaluation, in contrast, can fill us with regret, anxiety and despair' (p.77).

Feelings of anxiety and despair can be exacerbated by other individuals so it is hardly surprising that Joan Erikson recognised (as her husband had) the constant close connection between culture and identity and as a result, she noted that 'aged individuals are often ostracised, neglected, and overlooked; elders are seen no longer as bearers of wisdom but as embodiments of shame' (p. 144). And as identity reconstruction is an essential aspect of the desistance process and the transformation of self, existential crises (Butenait et al. 2016) and liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014) become almost inevitable and continuous with little chance of social mobility, all of which create a never ending psychosocial experience. This corresponds with Chu's study of older prisoners and their negative views of resettling back into the community, but Maslow (1943, 1954) believed that all human beings have an innate drive towards achieving personal fulfilment. This involves a hierarchy of needs which follows how individuals strive to reach their best self and the tensions that occur between each of the transformative stages. Maslow was driven by a belief that it is important for psychology to discuss the positive aspects of the self rather than just the negative aspects of human behaviour but as this review highlights, because transformative studies of desistance have largely focussed on the positive aspects of individual's trajectories the equally important painful experiences of desistance have been overlooked (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). This over emphasis on positive transitions may be because of its main focus of abstaining from crime and reducing offending and the need to reassure policy makers that somehow encouraging desistance results in a reduction of reoffending but this puts the onus on the individual rather than the state.

As discussed earlier, the painful narrative (McAdams, 2006) is an essential contribution to be able to gain a more holistic understanding of the lifespan journey and allows all biological and social needs to be met (Maslow, 1943, 1954). Maslow sees both approaches as essential in understanding the self and provides a structure he called the *hierarchy of needs* which includes physical needs such as air, drink, food, sex. In this concept, he argues that we strive for safety and protection then love and belonging among others, and from this reciprocal respect, admiration and friendship. As we satisfy our relational needs, we develop a desire

for self-esteem and finally, what Maslow terms 'self-actualisation'. This notion can be seen within studies of prisoners and desisters which have extended this concept by identifying the catastrophic effects when their most basic needs such as accommodation, employment, emotion, social bonds not being met (see Pike, 2014).

Maslow (1943, 1954) believed that personal growth is present throughout a person's life - is always evolving and never remains static which corresponds with the unending transformation of self perspective in this study and is further highlighted in his five hierarchy of needs which are as follows:

1. **Biological and physiological needs** - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep.
2. **Safety needs** - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear.
3. **Love and belongingness needs** - friendship, intimacy, trust and acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. Affiliating, being part of a group (family, friends, work).
4. **Esteem needs** - which Maslow classified into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) and (ii) the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g., status, prestige). Maslow indicated that the need for respect or reputation is most important for children and adolescents and precedes real self-esteem or dignity.
5. **Self-actualisation needs** - realizing personal potential, self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. A desire "to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1987, p. 64).

The relationship of Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs provide a basis to observe the ongoing life trajectories from early childhood to adulthood and old age. They offer an insight into the continual challenges and tensions that exist as individuals strive for contentment and what Maslow describes as self-actualisation. Previous studies relating to individuals making transitions show that generally they never reach that stage because they are always in the liminal stages during their early transformations.

2.5 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism has provided an essential contribution towards sociological and criminological studies of human behaviours in relation to prisoners and crime and deviance for decades. These include Clemmer's (1940) study of prison culture and 'prisonization'; Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment and deprivations; Goffman's (1961) total institutions; Becker's (1963) labelling theory and Sutherland's (1939) differential association of learned behaviours. But it is only recently that symbolic interactionism has been acknowledged in relation to individuals moving away from crime and criminal behaviours such as in Maruna (2001) and Giordano et al's (2002) cognitive and identity transformation theories. Maruna's (2001) study of 'making good' and Giordano et al's (2002) cognitive transformation theory provide an essential lens through which to analyse narratives in relation to identity shifts. In other words, such intricate analysis of human interaction has been used in relation to individual's negative behaviours but only in the last decade in relation to positive behaviours. And although symbolic interactionism is not always specifically acknowledged in desistance studies, it has provided a significant contribution.

Symbolic interactionism emphasises the importance of acceptance from others which can be seen within Fergus McNeill's (2014) notion of tertiary desistance and how the view of others is an essential process within desistance and reintegration. Mead (1964) argued that individuals use symbols to make sense of meanings within their daily interactions with each other in much the same way desisters symbolically imagine their future self - the person they aspire to be (Giordano et al. 2002). This interlinks with previous studies which have argued that existentialism and symbolic interactionism can be successfully combined to examine self reflection within individual narratives (Kotarba & Fontana, 1984; Crewe & Lippens, 2009; Farrall, 2005).

Goffman's (1959) use of theatrical metaphors in relation to an individual's *presentation of self* extends the symbolic concept to social interaction which analyses how individuals portray their identities to others and also how presenting oneself influences the views and perceptions of others. This becomes an essential process in the latter stages of McNeill's (2016) 'tertiary' desistance argument that

in order to become fully integrated, individuals need acceptance from others so they can belong to a moral community (see chapter 6), but barriers often prevent this from happening which can lead to an unending transformative cycle. Interestingly though, many individuals who are shunned and stigmatised (Goffman, 1963; Armstrong & Ludlow, 2015), refuse to accept the derogatory labels that become attached to them (Jefferson, 2002). In other words, they only accept some of the views others have of their behaviours and identities. Although it is important that individuals present the image they want others to see, it is also important that they choose an identity of which they feel most comfortable. Goffman uses the term *dramaturgy* (1959) as a symbolic gesture where the world is a stage and we are all actors who play out different roles which vary within different scenarios. How we become skilled in managing our many identities using actions, gestures and expressions that we consciously and unconsciously display on a daily basis is what Goffman (1959) termed *impression management*. Goffman's analysis of the self through acting analogies offers a frame of reference to understand how we present and transform 'ourselves' to others which many of us refer to in layperson's terms as 'wearing different hats'. This conscious or unconscious act is designed to influence the information that is available within a social interaction'.

In other words, individuals are continually seeking approval and acceptance from others while at the same time, identities can act as filters of selective perception and interpretation as individuals mutually role-take with one another. Mead referred to this as 'taking the role of the other' and so our 'front stage' image will be very different at work dealing with clients and work colleagues to the image that is portrayed when at home. Theatrical analogies have often been used as an analysis of the self. Goffman for example, discusses the masks we wear in public and what we portray to others, i.e. the 'front region' and hide in the 'back region' of ourselves. The importance of this in relation to distance and the transformation of self is that individuals have to become quite skilled in dramaturgy because it is core to how individuals compartmentalise past and present identities (Maruna, 2001). This is not because they are in any way trying to hide their pasts to be deceitful but because of how their identities become stained through stigmatisation and labelling from others. Becker's (1963) labelling theory relates to how individuals become labelled as 'deviants' and he believed that a deviant act only becomes labelled as such because groups of individuals in power and

society as a whole attach that label. Each society creates deviants with its own set of moral rules whereby if breached, will result in becoming criminal or deviant. This becomes a social construct that not only varies from one society to another but also throughout history. Becker refers to how 'some deviants (homosexuals and drug addicts) develop full-blown ideologies explaining why they are right and why those who disapprove of and punish them are wrong' (ibid, p.2). But Jefferson (2002) coins the term a mis-reflected self to explain how individuals refuse to be labelled which contradicts Becker's (1963) notion that somehow individuals have no choice or desire to resist these labels:

Like the oft-noted failure of Becker's (1963) labelling theory of deviance to explain the category of the secret deviant, Meadian psychology cannot account for the subject who sees her (or him) self differently from the self reflected back to others, what we might call the mis-reflected or mis-recognised self. Consequently, the labelling approach was always happier explaining the adoption of the labelled identity than resistance to labelling, which tended to end up suggesting, lamely, that the take up of a label was not automatic - individuals could choose not to adopt the label' (Jefferson, 2002, in Hogg & Carrington, 2002, p. 146).

Therefore, individuals do not always see what others reflect back to them so what does this mean for desisters? It could create identity confusion whereby individuals struggle to negotiate identities they feel would be the most appropriate for their sense of self. They need to feel comfortable of who they are and how they feel they are portrayed but sometimes labelling prevents them constructing the identities they wish to construct because of continual labelling by others and this can then lead to what Merton (1948) describes a *self-fulfilling prophecy*. Despite numerous attempts to reinvent themselves and their identities, some individuals cannot escape their past lives and therefore rather than resist the labells it becomes easier to own them.

Self prophesising can be depicted within Becker's (1963) work when he refers to moral crusaders or moral entrepreneurs who force labels on to others as they feel the need to control certain behaviours and activities and as a result those constructed as deviants sometimes develop their own set of ideologies so for example, they develop their own set of beliefs that they are right and those who view them as deviant are in fact wrong.

For interactionists, language is at the core of the structure of the self and transformation of self which has been demonstrated within narrative criminology

and desistance studies (Maruna, 2001). Through narrative and storytelling, individuals are able to make sense of meanings which according to Mead are symbolised and therefore language is communicated through our understanding of such symbols. For example, a person may remind us of someone we have had bad or good experiences with and therefore, our communication with that person may be influenced by those historical experiences.

In terms of desistance studies, symbolic meanings can be translated to how individuals view their imagined selves (the people they aspire to be) (see Giordano et al. 2002). This highlights Mead's claim that the self is something which has a development; it is not initially there at birth but arises in the process of social experience and activity. Sociologists such as Becker (1963); Young, (1971); and Hall, (1978) have analysed the use of language in labelling and stigmatising individuals in forming identities whereas desistance scholars have analysed the use of language in reconstructing and forming new identities (Maruna, 2001). Yet despite this positive transformation, whatever a person does to reassign themselves new identities, the perception of others will never change because of the inherent distrust towards people with convictions and an attitude that no one can ever really change.

Becker (1963) and Merton (1948) saw this as a problem when a person identifies with this label and adopts it as their master status because they see no other way. The primary act is a deviant act that may or may not even be noticed by others or may even be accepted such as road traffic violations, and certain anti-social behaviours. Yet these criminal offences are situated within the realm of deviance and therefore not viewed as serious as a criminal offence. The master status (see Lemert, 1951) relates to the more serious offender profile which is what others view as belonging to the criminal classes as opposed to the primary (deviant) profile which is associated with less serious behaviours. But because of the relentless stigmatisation associated with the more serious offending profiles, it is often then embraced by the stigmatised which leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Merton (1948), describes this process as, 'in the beginning, false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true' (as cited in Newburn, 2013, p.224). This is a symbolic interactionist example - in particular drawing from Cooley's (1902) 'looking glass self' of how an offender's behaviour reflects what is expected of them.

Symbolic interactionism incorporates many of the human experiences discussed thus far as there are many overlaps. Within desistance theory, the symbolic interactionist approach provides a more in-depth analysis of cognitive shifts and personal life changes and it has become a prominent factor in developing a more holistic overview of the desistance process which involves internal changes (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna, 2001). These are essential ingredients for the transformation of self and though symbolic interactionism provides a broad understanding of micro human behaviours, it is through the lens of desistance theory that symbolic interactionism provides a much clearer and relevant psychosocial analysis of prisoners and ex-prisoners transformations.

2.6 Perspectives on desistance

This section will further develop previous discussions about how various desistance approaches relate to the core theories of the self outlined in this review which combined, help develop a psychosocial model of the self. For example, desistance studies link existentialism to self-change (Farrall & Calverley, 2006; Crewe & Lippens, 2009); symbolic interactionism and cognitive shifts (Giordano et al. 2002); identity reconstruction and psychological transformations (Maruna, 2001); and social theories in relation to education, marriage and employment (& Laub, 1993; Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Earlier desistance studies focussed on external factors using an informal social control perspective which discussed ‘turning points’ such as marriage, college, employment, and the military as being influential on reform (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Shover, 1996). Sampson & Laub’s (1993) work was a follow up of Glueck & Glueck’s (1940) early work which argued that ‘ageing is the only factor which emerges as significant in the reformative processes. Sampson & Laub’s age-graded theory was hugely significant because by continuing from Glueck & Glueck they were able to examine entire life span the life trajectories. But although age remains among the best predictors of desistance’ (as cited in McNeill et al., 2012, p.4), this theory is not without its flaws because the ageing process can occur in ways other than biologically, such as through maturation excelled through life experiences (Rutter, 1996). Laub & Sampson’s age-graded theory has provided a useful concept of the life course trajectory, but it focussed

on external factors such as marriage, employment and education and the sample lived within a time period when they were able to transform their lives through higher education as a result of new opportunities offered by the American G.I. Bill (1944) (Olson, 1973), but today these advantages would not be so forthcoming. In both the US and the UK, some criminal convictions would prevent someone enlisting into the military or gaining civilian employment, but there are encouraging changes on the horizon in the UK as a direct result of a campaign known as 'ban the box' (see Unlock, 2018). 'Ban the box' encourages employers to change their recruitment policies towards people with convictions which has been mirrored in relation to university admissions policies (see UCAS, 2018; University Westminster, 2018).

Declaring convictions for employment and education continues to be contentious and causes many barriers, but despite the many hurdles experienced by desisters, Burnett & Maruna (2004) identify hope as an important emotion in desires to desist as did Farrall & Calverley (2006), in their study of emotional trajectories of desistance (i.e. the shifting emotions experienced during processes of desistance). Initially, hopes are for a 'better life' and sustain motivations to desist, whereas later, hopes become more concrete and more closely related to 'conventional' aspirations (better job, larger house, etc.).

The main premise of desistance is about abstaining from crime, but theorists have now realised that desistance is more complex than this which involves an ongoing process with many challenges and self-analysis, yet it could be argued remains somewhat limited. It is agreed that desistance includes a transformative process which involves a reconstruction of new identities (Maruna, 2001) a reintegration within society, but it falls short of examining the ongoing complex challenges beyond the tertiary stage of the desistance transition (McNeill, 2016). McNeill's notion of a tertiary desistance process offers a much needed additional stage whereby the desister becomes part of a conventional community which not only includes shifts in behaviours or identity, but also shifts in one's sense of belonging to a (moral) community. It extends Farrall & Maruna's (2004) primary and secondary desistance concept which may involve lulls (see Weaver & McNeill, 2007) in and out of criminal activity which eventually subsides as they progress towards developing new identities. The tertiary stage adds to this by including how desisters reintegrate within conventional society which posits that since

identity is socially constructed and negotiated, securing long term change depends not just on how one sees oneself but also on how one is seen by others (Becker, 1963), and on how one sees one's place in society which as discussed in the previous section does correspond with the symbolic interactionist theory (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1986).

This suggests that external factors are still significant and essential contributors but more recently, there has been more focus on subjective transformations (Burnett and Maruna, 2004; LeBel et al., 2008; Maruna, 2001). Examples of this comes from Giordano et al. (2002) and Farrall (2005) who argue that would-be desisters need to identify a 'blue print' for the 'sort of' person they want to become which is partly about role-adoption and partly about identifying a set of values or moral standards. Maruna (2001) extends this notion by examining how desisters use a method of re-biographing where desisters reinterpret their past in such away as to recast their past experiences as needing to have occurred for the 'real me' to emerge. They display an "almost missionary sense of purpose in life" (Maruna, 2001, p.9) and construct new narratives of their past in order to make sense of the past and the future. In other words desisters see their past experiences as having been essential in making them the better person they are today.

That is not to say that they do not still feel shame and regret for their previous activities which is something that Farrall & Calverley (2006) suggest are most common towards the end of the emotional trajectory. This emotional trajectory is clearly outlined within Giordano et al's (2002) four-part theory of cognitive transformation: (1) A general cognitive openness to change; (2) Exposure and reaction to 'hooks for change' or turning points; (3) The envisioning of an appealing and conventional 'replacement self'; (4) A transformation in the way the actor views deviant behaviour so in other words, the transformative process eventually leads to a less favourable perspective of deviance. Giordano and colleagues extended the cognitive transformation theory through exploring spirituality and desistance which Maruna et al. (2006) also examined in their study of religious conversion. It offers an additional perspective of life transformations whereby individuals find religion as a hook for change (Giordano et al. 2002) and the religious community enables belonging and reintegration (McNeill, 2016). But Giordano et al's (2008) study supports the argument that desistance from crime is limited with its focus on crime because as they argue,

their results were unable to provide lasting changes through an individual's religious faith alone without the influence of other factors such as socio-economic factors that relate to desistance from crime. Therefore, they suggest further research would benefit from a broader focus on areas of life other than criminality that may be enhanced by a strong religious faith, including mental health and parenting outcomes (as cited in Giordano et al. 2008). In other words, religious faith did not just impact on moving away from crime also other aspects of the life transition.

Although religion's effects can be viewed usefully through the lens of social control, acquiring a spiritual foundation is also compatible with the principles of differential association theory, particularly symbolic interactionist versions (e.g., Giordano et al. 2002; Matsueda & Heimer, 1997). Thus, 'religion can be viewed not only as a source of external control over individual conduct but also as a catalyst for new definitions of the situation and as a cognitive blueprint for how one is to proceed as a changed individual' (as cited in Giordano et al. 2008, p.102). Introspection through the narrative approach which Maruna (2001) refers to as, 'within-person' changes are essential for the transformation of self as ex-offenders must continually address their offending 'triggers' and be self-critical of their own identities in order to make that transition. And though both informal social control and subjective approaches are equally important, 'individualisation discourse', puts the onus on the individual offender thus eradicating the state from any blame (Barry, 2015, p.94). Desistance is usually presented through a positive lens in relation to 'making good' and redemption scripts (Maruna, 2001), yet desistance can be a lengthy and painful experience. A recent desistance study by Nugent & Schinkel (2016) offers their pains of desistance perspective which was derived from their study of former long-term prisoners. The pains of desistance parallels Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment as being an attack on the psyche where they use three main (but interconnected) pains. The first one, *Pain of isolation* emerges as a result of where their participant attempt to avoid offending through isolating themselves, secondly, the *pain of goal failure* is where their identity was in a liminal state (Healy, 2010, 2014) where they were no longer prisoners, but had not yet fully served their sentence, or achieved a new identity. Thirdly, the *pain of hopelessness* is the final pain of desistance which was a product of the first two pains: not feeling able to fully take part in life or to move

towards their goals meant that many of the men were slowly giving up hope for anything other than a life of merely existing.

Liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014) becomes a dominant theme within the painful desistance process but yet it is a necessary transition to the next rite of passage but one that is delayed for those with criminal convictions. The role of liminality in relation to the pains of desistance is something in need of further study. Nugent & Schinkel (2016) refer to the liminal stage during the pain of goal failure which is an under researched area of the desistance process yet one of most difficult and recurring aspects of the desistance process (Healy, 2010, 2014). Liminality describes how individuals exist between two separate worlds - neither of which they belong (Healy, 2010, 2014). The first stage of liminality begins in prison which involves internal conflicts where identities and beliefs are shaped by the prison habitus (see Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Maruna, 2001) and becomes a continual issue throughout individual's trajectories. Stenner (2017) relates liminality to a psychosocial process where experiences happen during occasions of significant transition, passage or disruption. Desistance is a significant transition whereby there are a series of periods of limbo experienced by ex-offenders who are attempting to make the transition from being defined by their pasts to becoming accepted by mainstream society.

Recent theories also view desistance as a 'chicken and egg' factor (Colman & Vander Laenen, 2012) which posits that while desistance often focuses predominantly on why and how offenders move away from crime, it is often the case, that this is a secondary factor and recovery from such as substance abuse needs to be addressed first. Albertson et al. (2015) who studied ex-military veterans who had offended since leaving the military argue: 'there is a growing acknowledgement that both recovery from substance misuse and desistance from crime are lived transitional processes grounded in social relationships and community' (p.1). In the past some authors have argued that our state of knowledge is limited, as the processes underlying desistance remain relatively unclear (Kazemian, 2007). Primarily, this is because the study of desistance is plagued by a variety of conceptual, definitional and measurement issues (Kazemian, 2007; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Maruna, 2001). However, these studies examined participant's which Liem & Richardson (2014) describe as 'general offenders' which is not wholly representative.

There are several sub-groups of desisters that are not typical of other samples used in previous desistance studies, who would have very different transformative experiences. For example, lifers and ‘one-off’ (Maruna, 2001) offenders both of whom are unlike the general offender population (Liem & Richardson, 2014). In a study on life sentence prisoners, Liem & Garcin (2014) claim that that research based on short-term incarcerated offenders cannot be directly translated to long-term incarcerated offenders. Lifers do not experience the same traditional turning points, such as establishing family ties and employment as the general cohorts of individuals studied in other desistance studies and will therefore experience a different process that determines their success versus failure compared to general delinquents who serve shorter sentences. Desistance is also extremely limited for sex offenders of all ages who face double stigmatisation due to the nature of their offences being taboo in society (Hulley, 2016). However, such changes can be severely hindered if those attempting to desist from crime suffer from mental health issues, which is another limitation worth highlighting (Albertson et al. 2015). There is a fundamental dearth of research around mental health issues and desistance with limited studies focussing on substance abuse.

Because desistance theory focuses on the process of abstaining from crime and related behaviours, it may be of interest to practitioners and policy makers of prison reform. There are systemic failures where authorities are only interested in how desistance can reduce re-offending which fails to address the more subjective, intuitive and emotional aspects of the desistance journey. Weaver & McNeill (2007) argue that it takes time to change entrenched behaviours and the problems that underlie them and therefore the criminal justice system should expect it to be a zig-zag process and therefore be more sparing with imprisonment. This is because of the complexities of the desistance journey and by using prison every time a desister relapses merely delays the desistance process for many more years.

Most scholars now tend to stress the interplay between ageing, informal social control and cognitive transformation theories. It is not just getting older, getting married or getting a job, it is about what these kinds of developments mean and signify to offenders themselves and whether they represent compelling enough reasons for and opportunities to change the pattern of one’s life. Whatever perspective one takes, it is generally agreed that there is an initial decision to give

up crime or from another perspective a desire to change identities or recover, but there must always be an initial willingness to change and stop offending according to Cusson & Pinsonneault (1986). They argue that their own rational choice usually stems from shock such as being wounded in a bank robbery; growing tired of prison; anxieties related to crime; and taking stock of what is most important to them. Cornish & Clarke (1986) also support the argument that desistance involves choice whereby those involved in serious crime can still eventually reach a stage in their lives where they realise that it is time to make changes in their lives and abstain from crime. Whatever the catalyst for change whether it involves shock, ageing, or the chance to better one's life through employment, education or the formation of new relationships, these can only happen with the initial decision to change.

2.7 Concepts of the total institution

Goffman described total institutions as: 'a place of residence and work where a large number of situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable length of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. This encapsulates the whole inmate experience, but this could also be applied to the experiences of desistance post release as individuals struggle to reintegrate (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) and how some individuals experience the mortification of self more so after release from prison than when they were incarcerated where in fact they experienced catalysts for change (Giordano et al. 2002). This provides a complete paradox of the total institutional concept which include early stages of desistance and the transformation of self within prison but continual and surmounting obstacles and the stripping of identities within mainstream society.

But Scott (2015) argues that there was a latent agency in Goffman's (1961) model that has been overlooked, and thus the original total institution was not entirely repressive, and therefore offers a contemporary example of 'Reinventive Institutions' (RIs) (p.218). Scott argues that reinventive institutions which include clinics, retreats, and universities are 'designed to educate, enrich and develop people's talents or abilities' which this review posits can be attributed to prisons and desistance (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016), but moreover the notion that prison

can and does enable a reinvention of the self through its very nature. Few would imagine that a prison could provide benefits for its residents but clearly there is evidence that they support this idea (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016).

This contrasts the argument by prison activists and reformers that prison does not work, but as this thesis demonstrates, in many cases, prison does work. It works because it provides structure and routine (Pike, 2014) and opportunities for self-expression not because the punishment of being incarcerated works. Instead this review advocates that perhaps the social space, structure and time that many of its residents have perhaps never experienced, can be nurtured somehow to provide space and time for learning, self-reflection improvement.

Goffman's total institution concept corresponds with Sykes's (1958) pains of imprisonment which both highlight a series of personal restrictions that have a demeaning impact on the self, including loss of liberty, autonomy, and sexual deprivation and how attacks on the prisoner's ego and sense of self-worth were fundamental to incarceration.

Like most men, the inmate must search for his identity not simply within himself but also in the picture of himself which he finds reflected in the eyes of others; and since a significant half of his audience is denied him, the inmate's self-image is in danger of becoming half complete, fractured, a monochrome without the hues of reality. The prisoner's looking-glass self, in short-to use Cooley's fine phrase-is only that portion of the prisoner's personality which is recognised or appreciated by men and this partial identity is made hazy by the lack of contrast (Sykes, 1958, p.290).

Sykes's analysis argues there is a moment of self-analysis where inmates are within the surreal and meaningless environment which only provides a world of incomplete identities and therefore it could be argued that this is what causes individuals to begin a process of self change. Prisoners begin searching for identities from within and also through the eyes of others, as argued by symbolic interactionists (Cooley, 1902, Mead, 1934, Blumer, 1986).

As discussed earlier, the total institution concept can be translated to various perspectives of desistance for example, where desisters become stripped of their identities through labelling (Becker, 1963) and stigmatisation (Goffman, 1963) but Sykes's pains of imprisonment can also be paralleled to the pains of desistance

(Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) where individuals undergo similar deprivations of the self as they do in prison which hinder and create ongoing obstacles throughout the desistance process (see chapter 6). But where these experiences differ is when these deprivations in prison lead to the transformation of self while in the outside world they lead to stagnation and lengthy periods of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014).

Syke's developed five pains of imprisonment including:

The first pain of imprisonment is 'the deprivation of liberty', caused by isolation and over time, Syke's (1958) noted that prisoners lose their connection to free society outside the prison walls, and become lonely and bored. The second pain of imprisonment is the 'deprivation of goods and services' where prisoners do not have the right of ownership and despite the fact that their basic needs are met they are forced to live in what Sykes describes as 'a harshly Spartan environment which they define as painfully depriving' (p.68). The third pain of imprisonment is the 'deprivation of heterosexual relationships' which is 'involuntary celibacy' (p.70) that represents, he argues, a figurative castration, which is both physically and psychologically serious. The fourth pain of imprisonment, 'the deprivation of autonomy' refers to the ways in which prisoners are denied self-determination, or the ability to make choices, with respect for instance to when they eat and sleep, or the work that they do. The fifth and final pain of imprisonment is the 'deprivation of security' through the infliction of 'prolonged intimacy' with violent and aggressive men: '... the constant companionship of thieves, rapists, murderers ... is far from reassuring.' They are also at risk of sexual abuse. All of this makes inmates acutely anxious, because the need to stand up to threats against them is a test of their 'manhood' (p.78).

Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment and Goffman's (1961) total institution concepts are a useful lens through which to analyse existential crises but more importantly how individuals overcome these crises when they find themselves experiencing what Sykes referred to as an 'destruction of the psyche' (1958) and what Goffman referred to as the 'mortification of the self' (1961) caused by incarceration. Both authors stressed the powerful effects of such institutional environments on the sense of self but life in and after prison is a complex psychosocial process in which the individual has to balance his or her inner

conflicts and anxiety (very often contradictory) expectations. For example, Goffman's (1961) total institutions and Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment notion is contrasted by McNeill (2011) who argues that 'for some people, imprisonment does become a kind of opportunity; a chance to re-assess the past and re-consider the future; a means of straightening out and connecting with services that might provide the sorts of post-release support' (p.1).

This is supported by Crewe's (2007) study which showed that ex-drug addicts or alcoholics blamed themselves for their incarceration, while renouncing their former selves for which they held their drug habits responsible. They accepted their incarceration and even embraced the prison's moral integrity. For them, prison was considered a 'righteous intervention, not just a predictable outcome of offending. They placed themselves on the same moral plane as the institution and used normative language to summarise their predicament' (ibid, p.266). 'Most fixated on projects of self-improvement, seeking to demonstrate to themselves, their loved ones and to the law-abiding world that prison represented that they were 'good people'. Imprisonment was an opportunity for self-betterment and moral reparation' (ibid, P.256).

This section began with a discussion of Goffman's (1961) total institution concept and its impact it has on the self and how this environment strips individuals of their identities. Scott's (2015) discussion of reinventive institutions offers an alternative perspective which claims an increase of people seeking periods of intense self-reflection, education, and enrichment in pursuit of 'self-improvement' within institutions which can in part include prisons. Naturally, individuals do not voluntarily seek to improve themselves by going to prison, but previous studies clearly show that prisoners and ex-prisoners are also seeking enrichment which begins with self-reflection during their incarceration and supports McNeill's (2011) earlier argument that prisons can offer opportunities for self-reflection. The total institution concept can be translated to desistance which is rarely discussed because the emphasis of desistance is about making good (Maruan, 2001) which Nugent & Schinkel (2016) discuss in their pains of desistance perspective. The mortification of self that is experienced in Goffman's (1961) total institution and the pains of imprisonment caused by Syke's (1958) deprivations of the self, is something that is for many endured for much longer periods outside of the institution and within the community. This area is lacking

and yet it is something that is in dire need of further exploration because there seems to be a lack of understanding around the very complex and diverse experiences within prison and desistance.

2.8 Bourdieu's institutional habitus and the divided self

Whereby symbolic interactionism involves a micro analysis of behaviours, habitus exposes how an individual's historical biography can become a barrier towards the transformation of self caused by existential crises and liminalities (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Healy, 2010, 2014). Many of these existential crises and liminalities are caused by stigmatisation (Goffman, 1963) and rejection by individuals but sometimes they are caused by the institutional habitus of social institutions which include restrictions and traditions which are particularly oppressive towards particular groups of individuals. Reay et al. (2001, p.1) describe the institutional habitus as having 'no less than individual habituses, a history and have been established over time. They are therefore capable of change but by dint of their collective nature are less fluid than individual habitus'.

Previous literature around the institutional habitus concept is mostly around schools, colleges and universities and absent in relation to prisons. McDermott & King (1988) do refer to it however (although not specifically) in their article *Mind Games* about the tactical moves between staff and prisoners that are embedded within prison life:

In the context of prison, where staff represent the ultimate and pervasive power of the State, and prisoners are made symbolic of the threat to social order, it is hardly surprising that underlying all prison games is a concern for sheer survival. Survival games are played by staff as well as prisoners in situations which are more or less bizarre and not wholly of their own making (p. 360).

Therefore because the individual and institutional habituses are interchangeable, this section will discuss both of these concepts together which include internal struggles and self-negotiation linked to periods of existentialist crises, self reflection and self change (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). These experiences recur because as Bourdieu explains, habitus is about individuals dispositions aligned to their biographical histories which have become embedded within one's sense of self and the structures which are fundamental of a particular type of environment such as material conditions of existence characteristic of a class produce habitus. Put simply, habitus consists of our stored identities within our biographies,

therefore, the concept of habitus offers a significant contribution to understanding the transformation of self because it provides a framework from which to observe everyday behaviours within social contexts and individual's dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Moreover, Bourdieu's (2004) less known habitus clive or cleft habitus presents an additional element whereby the self can sometimes become split and destabilised due to inner feelings of being unworthy or in Bourdieu's words: 'a cleft habitus inhabited by tensions and contractions' (p. 100). Habitus is particularly useful when examining diverse groups such as ex-prisoners - a group of individuals that possess several complex facets of habitus. Habitus allows us to examine such groups within particular social settings and how they try to adjust, adapt and transform their sense of selves (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). This corresponds with existential sociology which as discussed earlier, is concerned with studying human nature within natural settings (Kotarba & Fontana, 1984) but although re-adjusting is an essential transformative process for ex-prisoners, it is by no means straightforward. Bottoms et al. (2004) shed some light on this in their research which explored young recidivists which showed that during their transitions from adolescence to adulthood, the participant's habituses were informed by 'past agency' (p.374) and also 'orientated toward the future' (ibid). They see these transformations as something other than just moving away from crime but rather developing new identities as say a 'family man' 'hard worker' and 'good provider' (see Laub & Sampson, 1993, 2003) and so the institutional habitus becomes an essential motivator or barrier.

Bottom's et al. (2004) argue that the set of beliefs which underpin habitus is underlying in masculinity and gender which is identified in Winlow & Hall (2009) where they discuss how participants may feel guilt for not reacting in situations where men feel threatened, therefore the individuals habitus can become a burden for not enabling personal growth. Although Bottoms and colleagues suggest that strong relationships can enable transformation, it is not so simple because habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) is something that is embedded in one's self and guides one's behaviour so expectations that have become deeply engrained can be the most profound but yet limiting component of self-transformation. For example, while symbolic interactionism involves interaction with others and self-transformation, how does the transformed self, negotiate past agency when the old and new selves come in to direct conflict? Bourdieu explains this through a

person's *modus operandi* (M.O.) which has become an essential tool for the criminal justice system through which to analyse behaviours by explaining patterns of criminal behaviours. The police use the M.O. term frequently as a way of understanding an individual's set of offending characteristics that relate to specific criminal acts and victimology (see Turvey & Freeman, 2011) and as a way to lead them to offenders. Therefore, if such characteristics are so embedded as to signpost the police and criminal justice system to suspects, then surely such engrained dispositions limit transformations for those with past criminal lives? This is where *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) and *liminality* (Healy, 2010, 2014) become intertwined but more specifically the divided self or *habitus clive* (Bourdieu, 2004).

The institutional *habitus* is indirectly referred to within Sykes's (1958) pains of imprisonment perspective which Neuber (2010) translates by expanding Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) concept of social space. This offers a significant contribution to understanding institutional *habitus* because it provides a framework from which to observe everyday behaviours (Goffman, 1961) within social contexts and individual's dispositions. And is particularly useful when examining diverse groups such as ex-prisoners - a group of individuals that possess several complex facets of *habitus*. In the same way people carry their dispositions throughout life, institutions also maintain imbedded dispositions which constitutes the notion of institutional *habitus*, for example prisons hold engrained seated dispositions situated from a long history of violence, overcrowding, power struggles between staff and inmates and everyday rituals amongst the inmate subculture and prison staff (McDermott & King, 1988). For example, following the 1990 Strangeways prison riots, Eammon Carrabine (1998, p.194) refers to this engrained prison staff culture at Strangeways where 'there was a strong canteen culture, actively supported and enjoyed by the former governor and is manifest in the celebration of hard drinking and the associated ethic of being hard men doing a hard job'.

Drake (2011, p.71) argues that all these attitudes and behaviours have become embedded within the 'institutional and organisational memory' of prison life which also creates a prison *habitus* amongst its prisoners whose identities and beliefs are shaped by the prison *habitus*. In other words, prisoners develop a narrative and presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) that becomes embedded within

their sense of self, but there are many paradoxes in relation to institutions (see chapter 4). As Reay et al. (2001) argue, the institutional habitus can be changed and there is evidence of this within prisons and their proactive approach towards prison to college programmes, but not so much amongst universities who are becoming even more punitive (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2017). Askham (2008, p.85) argues that students' initial transition into higher education can be explained as entering an 'alien environment' which can have a large impact on those from diverse backgrounds and what they encounter in a predominately middle-class environment. Previous studies that argue disadvantaged students tend to apply to non-traditional universities (Leese, 2010) and encounter different challenges (Thomas, 2002), provide us with some insight into the challenges ex-prisoners may encounter when entering university and how this may impact on their sense of self.

It is agreed that the more diverse students struggle to adapt to what Leese (2010) describes as a 'rigid structure' that is biased in favour of certain social groups thus making the transition for some, more difficult (p.242) which corresponds with Thomas (2002) who claims that students from non-traditional backgrounds struggle with many pressures. Bourdieu himself explored the experiences of working class students adapting to life in the upper echelons of the French education system which identified how they were caught within painful positions of social limbo (Healy, 2010, 2014) consisting of double isolation from both their origin and destination class. Bourdieu (1977, 1984) saw this limbo as a splitting of the self and a dislocation of habitus field that produces a fragmented self - a habitus clive (2004). This relates directly to the concept of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014) which creates a difficult parallel for ex-prisoners who have to adapt to both the expectations of wider society and an 'alien' university culture (Askham, 2008).

Leese (2010) uses Bourdieu's habitus as a conceptual framework in her research on the early experience of students entering post-1992 universities and although Leese does not specifically refer to habitus clive (2004), it is a concept that does support her findings that 'new students' experience a very fractured transition into higher education. And it can be translated to the experiences of student's from disadvantages backgrounds (Reay 2002; Becker & Hecken 2009) entering what is a predomenantly middle-class environment (Reay et al, 2005), but perhaps much

less in post 90's universities and something that could be studied in relation to ex-prisoners and their experiences of admissions into 'traditional' universities and post-90's universities where there could be some disparity.

Leese (2010) argues that when students from working-class backgrounds do enter university, they usually apply to the post-1992 institutions which are geared more towards students from disadvantaged backgrounds 'because of reluctance to move from their family home and a belief they think that they will 'fit in' (p. 240)'. Students commented on their concern about not having the appropriate language needed to succeed at university, and this supports the proposal by Bourdieu (1992) that there is a link between a person's habitus and their use of language. Furthermore, students added that at times they did not understand the language used by both academic and support staff.

Through Bourdieu's habitus we can analyse the personal conflicts that this parallel transformation of self creates from his concept of 'hysteresis' whereby change within a field (i.e. university, workplace etc) can create disharmony that will work in favour for some but not others. For most university freshers, their first year at university can be a very difficult period because of the many life changing experiences and its unfamiliar culture. For the ex-prisoner, they will experience this twofold because of how their cultural habitus conflicts with university life but also their criminal pasts which may cause diversity amongst their peers (see chapter 6).

Yet students from disadvantaged backgrounds do overcome these barriers and the reasons for this can be found within Bernstein's (1975) model of working class university students. He suggests that there are two distinct sets of behaviours amongst students and their working-class habitus: the *expressive order* which refers to students becoming involved in extra curricula activities and socialisation that adds to the students experience of university life and *instrumental order* whereby learning, academic development and coursework lead to graduation, both of which involve a *means* and *end*. In relation to desisters therefore, the expressive order translates to Shibutani's (1962) reference groups and social bonds (Laub & Sampson, 1993, 2003) and instrumental order mirrors Maruna's (2001) rites of passage in relation to desistance.

Bernstein (1975) describes five different involvements within these orders. Firstly, 'commitment' whereby students accept both the means and ends of the importance of education and secondly, 'detachment' which refers to those who accept the means and ends of instrumental order but reject the university's expressive order such as not interacting with friends. Thirdly, 'estrangement' is where students accept both the instrumental and expressive orders of university but somehow fail to meet academic demands. Fourthly, 'alienation' rejects both the instrumental and expressive order whilst fifthly, 'deferment' is about suspending involvement.

The cultural perspective of ex-prisoners entering university can be compared to Bernstein's (1975) argument that working-class university students are likely to become 'cultural outsiders' whose habitus will clash with the expectations and culture of middle-class institutions and they will experience a habitus clive (2004). They are most likely to fall into the detachment and alienation groups where they are likely to struggle with the expressive order of university life such as joining in groups, clubs and other social activities and by not understanding what is expected of them within the instrumental or expressive order thus becoming alienated and estranged. However, some ex-prisoners show that this is not the case which could be explained through their ability to develop an unwavering resilience (Pike, 2014). Perhaps the institutional habitus of prison life inadvertently prepares prisoners for university thus making the transition from prison to university much smoother which is a contrasting perspective to Graham's (2014) study of how school prepares men for prison whereby the experience of imprisonment resonated with the same emotions related to being excluded from school.

The concept of 'institutional habitus' argues that institutions possess dispositions embedded from a long history of rituals, regimes and protocol in much the same way as individual's maintain dispositions linked to their personal, historical biographies (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). According to McDermott & King, 1988, in prisons, the institutional habitus exists from a long history of overcrowding, power struggles between staff and inmates and everyday rituals amongst the inmate subculture and prison staff, however, previous studies show that such dispositions amongst prisoners can also be transformed such as through education, but not least from an overwhelming sense of crisis that leads to a desperate need

to change for the better (Butenaite et al. 2016). This crises of self is highlighted within Syke's (1958) examples of five personal deprivations created by the pains of imprisonment each of which attack the individual's sense of self, but as well as becoming engrained within the prisoner's identities, beliefs and sense of selves (Irwin & Cressey, 1962), they are also engrained within the 'institutional and organisational memory' of prison life (Drake, 2011, p. 71). But institutions seem to share an institutional habitus linked to their specific industry, and therefore this section was able to translate this concept to colleges and universities in understanding how all these environments maintain deep seated dispositions which can be difficult for some social groups, in particular those from the cusp of society.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has observed the many perspectives and intersections within core theories of the self and the core theme that interlinks all of them is the process of narrative (see chapter 2). This can be traced from the very beginning of the self-transformative process which includes an existentialist crisis (Buténaité et al (2016). But where individuals encounter feelings of isolation, anguish and loneliness but how through developing a personal narrative, they are able to overcome these experiences through strengthening their resilience (McAdams, 2006). Erikson's (1959) 'life span' model and Maslow's (1943, 1954) 'hierarchy of needs' concept, both offer a psychosocial theory of how individuals strive towards their best selves through intersections of life stages and the many complex life transitions that challenge their sense of selves. The psychosocial perspective gives an overview of how individuals move between different stages of their lives and the many tensions involved in these transitions. Several symbolic interactionist concepts draw heavily on the narrative approach in relation to human interaction and behaviours including Meads (1934) concept of how the mind and self, emerge from the social process of communication by signs; Goffman's (1963) observations of human interaction and stigmatisation (1961) and Becker's (1963) labelling theory of 'outsiders' such as those labelled as deviants.

Unlike other theories of self, desistance is not a standalone concept but rather a rendezvous theory which itself draws on other disciplines including psychology, sociology, law and criminology. Therefore, this chapter demonstrates the many complex intersections between each of the theories and how they go towards explaining the many complex and challenging transformations in identities and the self. As discussed earlier, desistance studies have drawn more on symbolic interactionism in recent years analysing cognitive transitions (Giordano et al., 2002), self-narratives and identity transitions (Maruna, 2001) but only a few studies have attempted to acknowledge existentialism with desistance (Farrall, 2005; Farrall & Calverley, 2006). This could be because it is implicit in the same way as liminality has been identified which put simply means although it is unspoken it is clearly evident within the literature.

It is clear from previous literature that many sociology and criminology studies have used existential ideas without specifically making reference to existentialism which is a hiatus this study aims to explore. But Fontana & Kotabra (1985) and Crewe & Lippens (2009) successfully combine existentialism with sociology and criminology through the power of narrative. Moreover, these studies have highlighted the existential experiences of reciprocal interviews between researchers and participants and how researchers position themselves within their studies (Farrall, 2005). This position is often seen from former offenders who have since become counsellors and advisors.

Individuals with a difficult past often develop new identities as ‘wounded healers’ where they see their role in life as helping others by drawing on their past painful experiences. Maruna (2001) demonstrates how the wounded healer is seeking redemption through making amends within generative roles as counsellors. This is also perhaps a form of self-therapy that they are doing something worthwhile but also as a way of reliving their own pasts they can somehow make sense of their own journeys. This can be cathartic and painful for the narrator as the wounded storyteller, Frank (1995) explains in his analysis of narrative in relation to illness. This is an important aspect of understanding the lives of individuals caught up within the revolving door of the criminal justice system along with addictions and mental health issues. Franks (1995) wounded storyteller allows us to contrast the wounded healer perspective whereby the emphasis is more on the internal narrative. The wounded healer uses a narrative that draws from their past

experiences to help others in their roles as counsellors and advisors without specifically referring to their past. But using Franks (1995) wounded storytelling we can learn about the difficulties of the wounded healer's journey before they became counsellors and advisors. An example of this can be seen within the work of Colman & Vander Laenen, 2012) whose study of desisters recovering from addiction found that their sample viewed themselves as recovering addicts not criminals which is an interesting new perspective of desistance.

Perspectives of desistance observes traditional theories of informal social control (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub 2003) and cognitive transformation (Giordano, et al., 2002) of which desistance scholar's view as being equally important thus providing a more holistic view of desistance. Although there is now a consensus that both structure and agency are involved in desistance, there still needs to be a shift in focus from it being about how and why individuals move away from crime and more about the individual complex psychosocial influences in their transitions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how my research study evolved from the initial planning stages through to data collection and outlines the conceptual frameworks I used to inform my analysis. Within this chapter, I locate myself from my own unique position as a researcher (outsider) and an ex-prisoner (insider) in order to explore how this position allowed me to engage with people with shared lived experiences to gather rich data through their stories. I will discuss the symbolic interactionist methodology which inspired this study and it is from this premise I begin to develop a psychosocial model of the self which incorporates internal and external influences on self-transformations. For example, the cognitive transformation theory of desistance (Giordano et al., 2002) provides a conceptual framework to analyse the participant's subjective trajectories. Informal social control theories include external influences such as the prison environment (Sykes, 1958), employment (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub 2003), university (Reuss, 1997; Cambridge University, 2016; Durham University, 2014; Darke & Aresti, 2016) and social bonds (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2016).

I wanted to locate those who had left prison, had continued education and successfully desisted. Therefore, I worked backwards so rather than entering prison to study prison education and then lose contact with my sample once they were released, I studied those who had already been released from prison, had successfully gained university places and desisted from crime. This enabled me to make links to how much of an impact prison education had influenced their post-prison education and desistance journeys.

In this chapter, 'philosophical perspectives' will discuss my ontological and epistemological positions. My ontological position is about individual experiences that are articulated through speech and narrative and how individual narratives are used to make claims about the existence of structures external to individuals such as class, gender and ethnicity while the epistemology of this study analyses the

educational processes and experiences of those who shared the same lived experiences as myself. This enables me to understand the social lives of individuals that I needed to understand - how they perceive their lived realities/socialities (Ritchie, et al., 2014).

My 'research design' incorporates several elements where I begin by discussing my 'researcher positionality' as an insider and how this impacted on the study. It also presents the rationale for the 'sampling' of my study and the process of recruiting participants. It discusses the 'interview' process from start to finish and also outlines the seven broad research topics that shaped the interviews which included: (1) Early childhood experiences (2) Early education (3) Life changes (4) Positive and negative life experiences (5) Education after prison (6) Identity (7) Change and Transformation. Finally, for this section, 'ethical considerations' are explained that needed to be addressed because of the sensitive nature of the topic and how it was necessary to take into account the possible impact of reliving their stories could have on the participants. These were considered before the interviews could commence which included (1) consent forms with information about the purpose of the research and its aims; (2) the identity of the researcher; (3) that the participation was voluntary and that they were able to withdraw at any time; (4) what participating involved; (5) how long the interviews would be and what topics would be covered; (6) whether and how data would be kept confidential and anonymity maintained.

This chapter explains how I conducted my 'data analysis' where I engaged with the data to analyse extant (existing) themes which include the concepts that are introduced in the literature review in addition to emergent (developing) themes. I will discuss the final process of data collection methods used for the interviews which explains the analysis and coding procedures I adopted. Finally, this chapter outlines each of the 24 participant's biographies including demographics, age, occupation etc.

3.2 Philosophical perspectives

This awareness of myself as the researcher is asserted and reflected in the research design and my interpretation of seeing and being in the world and the development of the research process. An important part of understanding myself

as a research tool lay in recognising the links between the ontological and epistemological positioning and the methods I as the researcher chose to employ in the collection of data. The selection of methodologies and research methods did not occur in a void, and neither was the process of selection dictated by the subject matter or phenomenon under investigation. Instead, it was linked essentially to the way in which I as the researcher visited the principal questions of ontology and epistemology and the assumptions of related research paradigms.

3.2.1 The ontological perspective

Blaikie (2010) defines ontology as: ‘the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality’ (p.6). In other words, it is a statement about what exists in the social world that is being studied (i.e. what the level of social reality is that the study captures and/or operates). As mentioned in the introduction, for this study, the ontology is individual experiences that are articulated through speech and narrative and individual narratives are used to make claims about the existence of structures external to individuals such as class, gender and ethnicity.

My original focus was about the impact of higher education on desistance from crime which was inspired from my insider perspective and my interest in other individual’s experiences. In other words, my personal experiences and understanding of the desistance process provided me with the knowledge that this study needed to draw on other concepts to further explore ex-prisoner’s transformation of selves. In chapter 5, my ontological position becomes the focus of several interviews as the participants attempt to negotiate whether or not to be open about their ex-offender identities while reflecting from my own shared, lived experiences. This symbolic interactionist experience resonates with the second stage of Giordano et al’s (2002) cognitive transformation theory and Cooley’s (1902) ‘looking glass self’ concept. In other words, the participants were imagining their future identities and also how they might be perceived by others if they were to be open about their criminal histories.

It also became apparent early in this study that many of the participants had or continue to go through a process of recovery from substance abuse. This diverges

from my own experiences but many of the participant's personal experiences did reflect my own experiences and therefore helped me to understand many unanswered questions that led to me conducting this study. These unanswered questions were explained through the 'chicken and egg' theory which identifies how desistance is subordinate to transformations of the self (Colman & Leanan, 2012) and also liminality which identifies the stages of limbo that are recurrent throughout the participant's trajectories (Healy, 2010, 2014). The main point to this argument is that the desistance literature often misses the fact that abstaining from crime is not necessarily the main issue of the desistance process.

In their article, 'Convict Criminology and the Struggle for Inclusion', Ross et al (2016) aptly explain the ethical dilemmas facing outsider (non-convict criminologist) researchers such as 'embarrassment, anxiety, nervousness, uncertainty over interpreting convict slang and innuendo - are seldom a problem for those familiar with the culture and language of the prison' (p.4). Most convict criminologists feel quite comfortable in the company of the types of people they have shared their lives with for many years. This was reflected by several of the participants in this study who only agreed to be interviewed because of their prior knowledge that I was an ex-prisoner. But this does not make the arguments put forward by convict criminologists as unchallengeable. For example, there were some aspects of the interviews that did make me feel uncomfortable and which I could not associate with such as one participant who had committed sex offences.

3.2.2 The epistemological perspective

Epistemology is defined by King & Horrocks (2010) as 'the philosophical theory of knowledge' (p.8). The epistemology of this study uses an interpretivist perspective in order to understand the social lives of individuals and how they perceive their lived realities/socialities (Ritchie, et al., 2014). From this position, I gathered empirical data which is concerned with the way in which personal experience influences knowledge and the importance of sharing this knowledge from the situated experiences of ex-prisoners. The distinctiveness of the interpretative approach is that it sees people and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings, as the primary data sources. Blaikie (2010) refers to this approach as a researcher's 'insider view' rather than the 'outsider view'. This approach takes into account, language, texts or objects but whichever of

these methods are used, the interpretivist will want to learn of people's subjective experiences of the external world and how they are constituted in their individual and collective meanings.

From the symbolic interactionist perspective, a researcher understands what is going on only if he/she understands what ex-prisoners believe about the world they occupy and their experiences of that world. In other words, the symbolic interactionist approach focusses on the neglected aspects of the positivist approach. The symbolic interactionist approach in research is to explore experiences, actions and variations across time and context. Glaser (1992) asserts that to find the answers, the researcher must enter the environment of participants and observe, interview and take notes to begin to understand the issues for the participants and priorities with these issues. The major concern for ex-prisoners in this study was being labelled and stigmatised and the constant obstacles they encountered while attempting to make transitions towards conventional society (McNeill, 2016).

Rose et al. (2016) argue that convict criminologists have their own epistemological problems. For example, they have to learn not to allow prejudices, bitterness or resentment to influence their work. And some convict criminologists need to understand that having been in prison does not make them experts on prison and criminological knowledge. From the insight afforded by lived experiences, convict criminologists can only be experts of their own experiences. Nonetheless, Rose et al., argue that former convicts who are now academics deserve an important role in debates over crime, corrections and law enforcement policy. The views of 'insiders' challenge established and commonly-held assumptions. The subjective experience of ex-convicts, together with their collective knowledge of prisoners, criminals and the world they live in, provide a critical analysis and outline understandings of the people and contexts that criminologists study.

Addressing epistemological issues of 'insider research' presents a uniquely reflexive scholarship combining personal experience with critical perspectives on the prison and desistance. This was experienced through the reciprocal dialogue between myself and some of the participants as they negotiated their identities through narrative (see chapter 5). Using subjective experiences through

scholarship was a part of some of the participant's epistemology. The broad objective of the convict criminologists is to explore a new horizon in criminological understanding which is an auto-ethnographic approach (Jewkes, 2011). However, whether subjective or objective, the views and interpretations of convict criminologists are inevitably affected by the experiences, knowledge stemming from years of living with, and among, criminals and other prisoners.

This is an essential aspect of the convict criminologists approach and therefore Rose et al., (2016) explain that while arguing the value of subjective inquiry, Jewkes (2011) highlights an increasing problem in criminology since ethnographic studies of prison and criminal culture became outdated in the 1980s. As a result, there has been an increase of studies informed primarily by official data and managerial sources. Without the benefit of insider interpretations, conclusions have often been monotonous, and often biased. This is because of researchers writing about crime and prisons without any real knowledge of the realities of criminal and prison life. And therefore, this study is in agreement with Jewkes that the 'lived experience' and associated emotions are an important compliment to research derived from empirical positivism and that both are required if a rounded perspective of criminological issues is to be attained' (p.11). In short, both the lived experience and the non-lived experience are equally as important.

3.3 Stating a case to use grounded theory method

The multiple concepts of the self which were discussed in the previous chapter led to me conducting both an inductive and deductive approach towards analysing the data that required further exploration in an attempt to draw out new ideas from the participant's experiences. The deductive approach is aimed at testing a theory while the inductive approach is concerned with generating new theories that emerge from the data. Although the deductive approach is usually associated with quantitative studies, Ritchie et al (2014), argue that: 'Although qualitative research is often viewed as a predominately inductive, paradigm, both deduction and induction are involved at different stages of the qualitative research process' (p.24). A grounded theory approach has also been adopted which originally depended on the process of inductive theory-building and was felt to be most

suitable analytical approach for this study. This is because of its emphasis on generating theories that explain social processes or actions through analysis of data from participants who have experienced them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It facilitates the move from a description of the participant's experiences to an understanding of the process by which it is happening. This approach therefore, permitted the development of a substantive theory which increased an understanding of ex-prisoner's experiences of life after prison - the barriers they faced and the extent to which they were able to overcome these barriers.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006) analysis (like all aspects of research) cannot take place in a theoretical or epistemological vacuum. Accounts which describe themes as "emerging" from the data are inherently flawed as they deny the active role played by the researcher in the identification of such themes. Such accounts suggest that themes already exist in the data, and that analysis is simply a process of unearthing them. However, 'if themes "reside" anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them' (Ely et al. 1997, pp. 205-206 as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006). In other words, participants are also required to be as active within an interview as is the interviewer and this is at the heart of the symbolic interactionist approach.

However, drawing on my previous discussion, it could be argued that Braun & Clarke's (2006) argument does not take into account the originality of rich data developed between researchers and participants with shared, lived experiences. The formulating and re-negotiating of identities through narratives clearly demonstrates (as seen in this study) and previous studies that new and emerging data develops through a reciprocal process (Crooks, 2001; Leese, 2010). In other words, participants are also required to be as active within an interview as the interviewer. Extant (existing) themes were analysed which as explained earlier, exist prior to analysis of the data, for example, how education can transform the self and how education can aid desistance; female criminality within the context of how women are treated harsher by the criminal justice system and the labelling of women as 'double deviants'. There were also causal links between dysfunctional childhood backgrounds and deviant behaviours and how desistance can negotiate self-change.

3.4 Research design

As outlined in the introduction, this section incorporates several areas of the research design including ‘my position’ as an ‘insider’ with personal experience as an ex-offender and prisoner. I discuss my researcher positionality and how this impacted on the study. It also presents the rationale for the ‘sampling’ of my study and the process of recruiting participants. It discusses the ‘interview’ process from start to finish and outlines the seven broad research topics that shaped the interviews and finally ‘ethical considerations’ are explained that needed to be addressed because of the sensitive nature. It explains the recruitment process of issuing consent forms and information about the purpose of the research including its aims; the identity of the researcher; that it is voluntary; what participating involved; how long the interviews would be and what topics would be covered; and how data would be kept confidential and that anonymity would be maintained.

3.4.1 My positionality

This research study was stimulated by the growing interest of prisoners and ex-prisoners wanting to enter education. I had entered higher education from prison a number of years before where I gained a bachelors and a master’s degree then spent a decade searching for employment. In 2012, I published my autobiography *Never Ending Circles* and as a result became a visiting lecturer on the university circuit. I became inspired to become part of university life again and so decided to start a PhD. I wanted to know more about the relationship between ex-prisoners and the life changing components of higher education and how it unites individuals regardless of gender, ethnicity and background. But I was inspired by ‘making good’ (Maruna, 2001) stories over 30 years ago while serving a prison sentence in Durham prison. I had read autobiographies by John McVicar and Jimmy Boyle who I discussed in chapter 1 which triggered my early desire to escape my unending poverty and misery through education.

There are many social sciences departments within universities that embrace a criminal past seeing it as informative rather than something to be stigmatised. But there are also tensions that exist which I wanted to review such as ex-offenders who face discriminatory admissions procedures from some universities and

rejections from potential employers. I soon discovered that education and employment worked hand in hand because one affects the other. I had many unanswered questions such as why after two degrees I was still practically unemployable and wondered what exactly I had to do to become reintegrated. But once I overcame this liminal period to later become a criminology lecturer, I remained and continue to remain within a stage of liminality as social mobility brings with it other psychological difficulties which is analysed through the lens of Bourdieu's *habitus clive* (Bourdieu, 2004).

On reflection, I now know that my own biography influenced the focus of this study but as Crooks (2001) explains, her researcher positionality (being a practitioner) was an advantage because this gave her insight into what questions she needed to ask but more importantly, how to ask them and how to probe leads as far as the participants were able to take them. Also, contrary to Liem & Richardson's (2014) claim that there are limitations on the validity of data in studies that rely on ex-prisoner's accounts (see chapter 5), the ability for ex-prisoners to develop and maintain social relationships is an advantage when ex-prisoners study ex-prisoners (Crook, 2001; see also Farrall, 2005). This process of exploration is not passive but reciprocal in that both researcher and participant are transformed. My insider researcher position gives further insight into generating research themes and interpreting the lived realities of ex-prisoners; though I was aware that my positionality may bias some of the research and therefore it was necessary for me to maintain objectivity as much as I could. There is a strong argument for a process of immersing oneself in a study whereby the researcher shares their biography with their participants and as Crook (2001) I was able to maintain objectivity through continual reflection. This was done by steering the interviews towards the scheduled topics if I felt the conversation was diverting too much while at the same time I was aware that it was essential to allow a free flow of conversation to continue. I was also continually reflective throughout the study which I wrote about in a field diary. The participant's speech and narratives are at the heart of this approach and throughout the interviews, it was clear that participants were in the process of re-negotiating their sense of selves and identities.

3.4.2 The insider/outsider dichotomy

This insider/outsider dichotomy refers to the tensions that exist of having two colliding identities during a research project and which can be analysed through the lens of Bourdieu's habitus (2004). This divided self was discussed in chapter 2 and becomes an essential aspect to the transformation of self, especially in understanding the dilemma that researchers encounter when identities clash. In my case, these two identities included ex-prisoner and researcher and so because I was interviewing ex-prisoners, sometimes this created tensions not only during my fieldwork but also during the writing up period of my thesis, and beyond the viva defence and completion of the entire PhD process. Amy Pollard captures this in her article, 'Field of Screams' (2009) about from her own experiences as an anthropology PhD student. She interviews 16 anthropology PhD students who report the emotional impact of their study during and after their PhD studies. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that individuals continue to experience emotional turmoil long after the fieldwork and PhD has been completed. Therefore, the tensions and emotions that are felt within a research study are long lasting, but for the researcher who shares the same traumatic, social and cultural lived experiences as their participants, these emotions can become overbearing and penetrate deep into the psyche to the extent of evoking trauma as the researcher is forced to relive their past experiences. As discussed in chapter 2, there are many examples within the discipline of existential-sociology (Fontana & Kotabara, 1985), where individuals relive their own experiences through shared narratives (see, Ebaugh, 1984; Warren & Ponce, 1977; Wickman, 2007). Moreover, these examples highlight the existential experiences of reciprocal interviews between researchers and participants and how researchers position themselves within their studies (Kotabara & Fontana, 1984). But despite the painful experience of reliving the past, this study goes into some detail about the importance of the painful narrative (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016; McAdams, 2006), (see chapter 6).

My researcher identity and former ex-prisoner identity created a fraction of identities and sense of self which feeds into one of the most central themes within this study called 'liminality' which Healy (2010, 2014) describes as a period of limbo and existing between two social worlds which in the case of ex-prisoners,

include their past and their present. The research study itself became confusing as the identities of my participants overlap with my own identity and during the sharing of stories, I felt that I even become part of their own study as we began to develop the same narrative. In other words, I relived the same traumatic experiences as my participants as we began to negotiate our identities through sharing narratives, reflecting on our identity confusion (see chapter 5).

My insider/outsider position developed a habitus clive (Bourdieu, 2004) which put simply is a divided self as a consequence of identity clashes. This is something that becomes significant within the desistance process because as one attempts to develop new identities (Maruna, 2001), past identities can come into conflict. This can be problematic in terms of reintegration and upward social mobility (Bourdieu, 2004) because it can make individuals feel they do not belong within certain communities (McNeill, 2016). This can come from feelings of not being worthy of social mobility or through lack of confidence and low self-esteem but more so from the institutional habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) that favours certain groups over marginalised groups where developing new identities is an essential life course (Laub & Sampson, 1993; 2003). Habitus clive became instrumental throughout this study and my own transformation of self which as this study purports, is unending. Bourdieu's (2004) habitus clive is a more transformative aspect of habitus through notions of a divided self and destabilised habitus. In *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* Bourdieu said that his was a divided habitus - a habitus clivé - as a consequence of the contradictions he experienced in coming from lowly social origins to achieve high scholarly distinction. According to Friedman (2016), this seems entirely plausible because Bourdieu was from a generation that experienced similar kinds of social and cultural dislocation as a direct consequence of educational and occupational advancement. My own unending transformation has been exacerbated by a collision of identities and a habitus split, firstly as a full-time academic member of staff and research student and secondly, as a former prisoner. These identities could not have been anymore multi faceted but I have successfully merged each identity by using my first-hand experiences of the criminal justice system to inform my teaching and my PhD study. The insider/outsider dichotomy perspective is evident in all academic disciplines and can be explained as a boundary that can be examined through the notion of liminality which is discussed throughout this thesis but in terms of the researcher insider/outsider dichotomy can be best explained through Bourdieu's

habitus clive (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984), not least caused by the institutional habitus of the academy (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

At times reliving painful memories was as difficult for me as it was for the participants because the interviews revived my own past experiences, but some of the participants said they felt that discussing their experiences was cathartic. In hindsight I would now be more prepared and aware of my own vulnerabilities as I now realise that in social sciences, the effect of interviews on the researcher is often underplayed and even ignored. I would argue that the emotional connectedness and impact that interviews can have on the interviewer is as important as any other data that emerges from research studies. The importance of being able to report the emotional impact of interviews on the interviewers has been raised by Yvonne Jewkes:

There is an unspoken understanding that if we disclose the emotions that underpin and inform our work, our colleagues will question its “validity” and perhaps even our suitability to engage effectively in criminological research (Drake & Harvey, 2010 as cited in Jewkes, 2011). So instead, where emotion is present at all, it is, as Ellis characterizes, “simply another variable to add to rational models for studying social life” (Ellis, 2009, p. 85 as cited in Jewkes, 2011).

Also, it seems clear that if a researcher conducts a qualitative study with individuals who have many shared experiences as themselves, they will encounter the same emotions. What I had not prepared for was the intensity of these emotions and the impact they would have on me. Because their lives were so similar to my own, each story opened up old wounds for myself and as a result, I struggled for many weeks afterwards. I was unable to analyse the transcriptions and though this may have been a traumatic time for us all, sharing our experiences with one another had been an important process. I had not prepared myself for what would become a very personally traumatic period of soul searching and emotional struggle during the research process. Possessing both an insider and outsider identity created unforeseen tensions which I was not prepared for and although I had been prepared for the emotional trauma that the interviews could cause the participants, I had not been prepared for how that it could impact on my own sense of self.

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and the notion that individual biographies include dispositions that translate throughout an individual’s life cycle, provides an

essential lens through which to conceptualise my own position as an insider/outsider. Prison ethnographic researchers have previously discussed the tensions of the insider/outsider position (Earle & Phillips, 2015; Davies, 2015), but because researchers are keen to complete their work, they continue regardless. At no point did I consider halting any of the interviews for the sake of my own emotional and psychological well-being, yet in hindsight, had I made a few subtle changes to my overall time plan, I may have avoided a lot of emotional trauma. For example, talking to others is essential and I took advantage of my supervisor's good nature to talk about many of the personal issues I was experiencing. Some of these included the impact of the research but more often the difficulties I was having in my personal life were also impacting on my PhD studies on a daily basis. His input and advice gave me enormous support and reassurance on both an academic and personal level which included some very difficult periods of self-doubt and emotionally difficult times.

One of the biggest challenges within this study was which voice to use. The interaction between the academic voice and the ex-prisoner was often confusing for both myself and the reader. Sharing lived experiences with participants provides rich data, a mutual trust and the chance to provide an insight created by both the researchers and participants. However, it also creates psychological difficulties that training programmes cannot prepare the researcher for. Several of my participants cried because of reliving many of their difficult pasts. While my participants relived their painful experiences which at times led to tears, I was reliving my own past traumas and difficulties. It opened up old wounds I had wanted to forget. But it is important and Lyng (1990) writes that much can be gained from retrospective reflexivity whereby the task is to make the research process itself the object of one's personal experience as a researcher. Complex issues of method and morality, epistemology and ethics are directly manifested in the personal traumas and the transformations that researchers experience in studying some forms of human conduct. Consequently, retrospectively analysing the personal tribulations of doing research can advance our understanding of the research process in important ways. The actions involved in generating data about complex human affairs are also actions that lead to transformations of self. Therefore, researchers who make use of field methods must be made aware of this dialectic and must be willing to accept the transformative consequences of the research experience.

When these narratives are extracted from a researcher who share the same lived experiences as their participants, it becomes autoethnographic. Ferrell (2012) coins autoethnography as ‘the ethnographic exploration of the self’ (as cited in Wakeman, 2014) which is still yet not accepted as a research method by some social scientists. This is recognised by Yvonne Jewkes which she expresses through Carolyn Ellis’s quote: “Why does social science have to be written in a way that makes detailed lived experience secondary to abstraction and statistical data?” (2009, p. 84). And argues that it stems from an underlying fear that if researchers disclose the emotions that have influenced their research that somehow the validity of their work will be questioned (Jewkes, 2011). Jewkes offers a strong argument that by not disclosing the emotional responses and autoethnographic roles within some very difficult and emotionally challenging environments such as prisons, they are ‘doing a disservice to those who follow them (e.g., doctoral students (see chapter 2)) who frequently approach the field with high levels of anxiety’ (Jewkes, p. 64).

Jewkes refers to prison research novices who embark on ethnography equipped with knowledge gained from ‘classic texts movies, television series, and the press’, which do not portray prisons in their true light. And therefore, the novice prison researcher enters an alien environment with an existing fear of the unknown which has become part of their “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984), the basic store of knowledge. Therefore, one might expect that the novice researcher who has experienced prison first-hand will perhaps not feel as challenged but even an experienced researcher such as Rod Earle encountered unexpected emotions when he returned to prison 30 years since being a resident.

For the novice prison researcher the environment is challenging, who has learned misleading and exaggerated accounts of the prison environment. Therefore, can interviewing ex-prisoners within different environment provide a less emotional experience? For the inexperienced researcher, there still may be an underlying fear of what questions they can and cannot ask someone who has served time in prison. There may be a fear of enquiring about their past criminal activities and prison experience. Jewkes explains:

Despite the “poignant, lasting, and eminently sociological” (Garot, 2004, p. 736), feelings the novice prison researchers experience, by the time they come to write up and publish their findings, most appear to have forgotten the sensations experienced at the start of the research process and have become blasé about their experience in prison (as cited in Jewkes, 2011, p.64).

This certainly separates the insider/outsider experience because former prisoners never forget the sensations they felt when they first entered the prison environment and any emotions that may have faded with the passage of time are abruptly evoked once re-entering the prison environment so how does the former prisoner turned prison researcher contend with such a transformative experience? Rod Earle, an established prison researcher and former prisoner explains this very eloquently:

We accumulated hundreds of hours “spending time” in the field but not much of it felt like “serving time,” or got close to the sense of doing a prison sentence. Imagine, for a moment, being locked in a train compartment crowded with people you have never met for about 3 months and consider that this train is never going to move but all around you, unseen, the world whirls and moves on. This is the disorienting stasis I experienced in 1982 as a prisoner in my early 20s in a short, and characteristically unnecessary, prison sentence. It was an experience I found I could not avoid reflecting on once I returned to prison environments as a qualitative researcher (Earle, 2014, p. 432).

The most important message we can take from this passage in relation to this section is how he was unable to avoid reflecting on his past experiences of prison which is an essential contribution to understanding the emotions and feelings of the researcher.

My ontological position is about individual experiences that are articulated through speech and narrative and it is through this approach that I was able to contribute from my own unique position. The epistemology of this study stems from the scholarship of those from similar backgrounds to myself but despite my insight into their lives through our shared experiences, I still needed to understand how they perceive their lived realities/socialities (Ritchie, et al., 2014). And therefore, as explained earlier, epistemologically, I used an interpretative approach examining forms of social life which are shaped by those who perform those social roles. From this position, I gathered empirical data which is concerned with the way in which personal experience influences knowledge and the importance of sharing this knowledge from the situated experiences of ex-

prisoners. Though this reciprocal approach proved an invaluable research method of gathering rich and powerful data, there were tensions where the insider and outsider position at times overlapped. In other words, at times, it can and is difficult to separate the old identity from the new identity and this can be explained through the lens of habitus.

3.4.3 Sampling

My insider/outsider position influenced how I sampled because I was aware of what exactly to look for and how to look for it, so for example, I am an alumnus of the Prisoners' Education Trust, and therefore I was already aware that my research would be of interest to them. I used a snowball sampling method where I initially found several participants who then voluntarily found other participants for me to interview. This was the most appropriate method because of the sensitive nature of the study which will be discussed further along. There was not set decision about how many individuals I should interview but according to Creswell (2013) 'narrative research may feasibly consist of a sample of just two or three individuals. However, as a rule, qualitative samples for a single study involving individuals are usually anything up to 50' (as cited in Ritchie, et al., 2014, p.118). Because this study focusses on just one design aspect, less than approximately 20 would have been too small whereas had I been using two research methods (i.e. interviews alongside writings including letters, essays, poems (Cohen & Taylor, 1972)), then a smaller sample would have been acceptable.

Prisoner Charities were contacted which included, The Prisoners' Education Trust, The Howard League of Penal Reform, Lord Longford Trust and The Convict Criminology Organisation. Each of these have their own databases of members which can give a rich source of participants that represent the sample population and is a very effective way of generating a sample frame – particularly for 'hard to reach' populations such ex-prisoners (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). Using these organisations enabled a sample frame to be generated because the criteria of the intended sample is not identified through official statistics or administration records as for example, the prison population or those on probation. Databases were not provided because of data protection and therefore potential participants were contacted via their organisation by email detailing the

proposed study. Participants were selected on the basis of fulfilling the recruitment criteria which was firstly, that the age range was strictly 18 or over. The reason for this is because the minimum age for higher education study is 18 and also because access to under 18s would create further ethical barriers which would have delayed the study. I was aware that the participants had vulnerabilities in that they were disclosing past crimes, demeanours and deviant behaviours through oral histories. Secondly, the criteria stipulated they must have served a prison sentence for an offence for which they had been found guilty. This was important because incarceration leads to existential crises of the self (Sykes, 1958) which can become a catalyst towards change (Aresti, et al., 2010) and therefore this became an essential analytical point of this study. Had the participants not served a prison term, this important psychosocial aspect of the transforming of self (Giordano, et al., 2002), would have been missed. For example, it emerged that prison can sometimes have a positive effect on individuals (McLean, et al., 2017; McNeill, 2014), but surprisingly this was something I had not considered initially, despite the fact my own transition towards a better future began during my time in prison. When the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) impacted on my own sense of self, I saw education as an escape from my destructive lifestyle. I also saw it as a way of developing a new identity (Giordano, et al., 2002) and giving something back (Maruna, 2001).

Another recruitment criterion was that they had entered higher education because the aim of the study was to analyse how higher education impacted on their transformations. It was also important that they had been found guilty of an offence that they had committed. This was because at time it was believed that the desistance process can only be analysed on those who are desisting from a criminal lifestyle. But as this study progressed, it became apparent that abstaining from crime was in fact a secondary factor in the participant's transformations and that in fact identity shifts (Maruna, 2001) and recovery were the primary factors (Colman & Vander Laenen, 2012).

At time of recruiting it was felt that had any of the participants been in prison as a result of a miscarriage of justice, there could be no transformation of self or desistance process to analyse. Not all prisoners have committed an offence and not all offenders have been to prison. But in hindsight, the impact of imprisonment of an innocent person would have provided an alternative analysis

of the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958). The main criterion though, was their availability to take part in the research. All gave written informed consent and the interviews were conducted in a quiet place with privacy such as local and university libraries and rooms that were provided at the participant's place of work.

I made a request to the charities that they pass on details of my research project to any potential participants. I also provided a consent form to complete. The protocol was robust in that it asked organisations to avoid being biased in which individuals the organisations chose to approach. It was stressed the need for diversity and therefore a pro-forma was sent to provide details of potential participants. This was to request as much diversity as possible including the range of educational levels from early entry to those who have continued through to postgraduate study to academic careers. The latter part of the sample was drawn mainly from the Convict Criminology Organisation which consists of two ex-prisoners turned career academics including its founding members, but because there were only two, this did not impact on my findings in any way. Additionally, participants were recruited by advertising through the charities newsletters.

In the case of interviewing ex-prisoners, it was stipulated as directed in the National Offender Management Services' (NOMS) ethical guidelines for interviewing prisoners, '...there are circumstances when a researcher is under a duty to disclose certain information' such as Undisclosed illegal acts and Behaviour that is harmful to the research participant, (e.g. intention to self-harm or commit suicide). 'Researchers must inform participants that they have a duty to divulge such information' (Gov.uk, 2014). Also, after consulting with several prison researchers who offered me advice, I also informed participants on the consent forms and at the beginning of each interview that any explicit disclosures of information that relates to harm to the self or others would be passed to the relevant authorities. In the case of NOMS guidelines relating to prison research, the first contact to report any disclosures would be the Prison Service, but because my participants were not in prison, I would have contacted the police.

I disclosed my ex-prisoner status at first contact with the participants, which was before the interview took place. This gave me the opportunity to address the convict code explicitly to participants - that as an ethical researcher I had to make

clear that if they revealed any past undisclosed crime/crimes, or intention to commit a crime/crime in the future involving serious harm to people unknown or known, I had a duty to pass such information on to the appropriate authorities. I also emphasised that my role as a researcher is something that I take very seriously and they should not assume that the traditions of silence that often apply between prisoners and ex-prisoners applied to this research. In his prison ethnography study, Davies (2015) disclosed his ex-prisoner status from the outset which enabled himself and his interviewees to formulate a mutual trust and rapport. He argues that had he not done so, his study may have been less productive and taken much longer:

I argue that my ideas, meanings and understandings were greatly facilitated by utilising my personal history of being an ex-prisoner, which enabled me to build up a rapport with the individual respondents through reciprocal information sharing of personal experiences (Davies, 2015, p. 463).

I also found this to be case. Some of my participants were already aware of my past which as mentioned earlier, led to their decision to take part in the study. And as discussed in chapter 5, the rapport that developed between myself and the participants became an essential tool for analysis because of how they used our rapport to negotiate their identities. This also influenced the recruitment process because the participants were more at ease in the knowledge of my shared lived experiences. We had built up a mutual trust and therefore the participants began contacting other ex-prisoners they knew had been in education and so the recruitment process became a snowball sampling procedure.

Snowball sampling is a method best suited for groups of a sensitive nature as Browne (2005) explains: 'Snowball sampling is often used because the population under investigation is "hidden" either due to low numbers of potential participants or the sensitivity of the topic' (p. 47). Biernacki & Waldorf (1981, p. 151) defined their chain referral sample as 'created through a series of referrals that are made within a circle of people who know each other'. Snowball sampling thus relies on the behaviour or 'trait' under study being social and participants sharing with others the characteristic under examination (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997, p. 793). 'Studies on 'hidden populations', such as homeless people, prostitutes and drug addicts, raise a number of specific methodological questions usually absent from research involving known populations and less sensitive subjects' (ibid, p.790).

As discussed earlier, sampling initially consisted of approaching prison reform charities and organisations that I am known to because of my ex-offender status. These charities and organisations then searched their databases for participants who matched the criteria. Some were also recruited because they were known to me which is similar to Irwin's study of lifers (Irwin, 2009). The reason snowball sampling is useful for sampling sensitive groups of individuals, is because in this study for example, participant's suggested other individuals to me who they felt may have been interested in taking part in the study and whose past experiences were known to them.

3.4.4 Interviews

The interviews explored how experiences of higher education among ex-prisoners impact upon the path to desistance and it was through this that I was able to develop a more robust and overarching argument that highlights the limitations of desistance and develops a psychosocial model of the self which enabled me to develop three sub-questions which later emerged from the analysis of the data, (1) What is the relationship between prison and the transformation of self? (2) To what extent does liminality impact on desistance and the transformation process? (3) What do ex-prisoners expect from higher education and are these expectations met? However, each interview followed a topic guide which enabled some structure of the interviews - although a reciprocal discussion was encouraged. I conducted 24 semi-structured interviews (13 males and 11 females) over approximately nine weeks travelling to various parts of the UK with a focus on the experiences of ex-prisoners who had entered higher education. The interviews were conducted in an informal style following research topics that were carefully chosen from my own personal insight and experiences of prison, desistance and transformations which gave me an advantage of which topic areas were most important for this study and the literature (Crooks, 2001). This method of choosing research topics as a guide is supported by (Mason, 2002) who asserts that for qualitative interviews, this is an important approach for when a researcher's ontological position suggests that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretation, experience and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality. Also, by using this approach I was able to explore

broader topics and gauge any potential emerging themes that would be worth further exploration during the analysis of the data.

These broader topics are as follows:

1. General introduction and early life

Opening with a discussion about topics unrelated to the study enabled me to find out contextual information about his/her current circumstances where they discussed their family, friends, and community. For example, we discussed household composition and personal relationships which included family, friends, and the community. Secondly, their working/non-working status and/or working patterns such as shift work, or pattern of being in and out of work regularly was discussed and also their spare time activities/interests and current mental/physical health situation.

2. Early education

The participant's early education was explored in relation to how school experiences shaped their transitions through adolescence and became a causal link to their subsequent deviant behaviour and how they now view education. It explored what their educational background was prior to entering higher education. Previous research shows that many prisoners report having had bad school experiences (Graham, 2014). For example, in 2002, the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, asked the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to explore with other government departments how to cut rates of re-offending by ex-prisoners. The report recorded that one of the problems was the level of prisoner's education. The study found that 30% of prisoners truanted; 49% males were excluded while 52% male and 71% female adult prisoners had no qualifications at all (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

3. Life Changes

Thirdly, 'life changes' discusses when the participant's decided that things were going to be different and how they proceeded to make changes towards a better future. It explored for example, their catalyst for change such as whether it was a 'light bulb' moment or a series of catalysts and turning points. Participants discussed what their convictions were for and what/if anything had changed them

significantly from when they committed their offences to their experiences of imprisonment.

4. Positive and Negative experiences

Fourthly, participants discussed their 'positive and negative experiences' in relation to desistance and transforming their lives such as the obstacles and successes they experienced. It focussed on the positive and negative experiences of employment and career development issues before and since instigating self-change through education. Also, a particular time they felt they were really helped with their employment or career development as a result of their education; particular people, organisations, or events; how they felt about this help; how they acted on this help; what if they had experienced any particularly unpleasant experience's that influenced them; how they felt about it and how they dealt with this experience.

5. Education after prison

The fifth topic was about the participant's 'education after prison' - their experiences of university admissions, student life and college culture, to understanding what led them to enter higher education. They were asked about the discipline they chose to study and why they chose that particular subject. It explored why the participants chose to enter higher education rather than further education; how old they were when they entered higher education and what their feelings were when first entering a university.

6. Identity

The aim of the sixth topic was to gauge how participants see themselves in relation to their ex-prisoner status, to explore their identity changes over time and the factors that influenced these changes towards how they now view themselves. Its aim was to enquire about a particular time or event where they feel education influenced how they began to view themselves differently. I was exploring how it made them feel and the way other people saw them, but also how these identities were influenced by their employment and how they feel others now see them.

7. Change and Transformation

Finally, the seventh topic aimed to find out how they see their future; their reflections on education and their intentions for education/work in the future. This method guided data collection with the aim of capturing the richness and complexity of the participant's biographies. Rather than allowing the schedule to dictate the flow of the interview, participants were free to express their views and experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2006). The advantages of this method are that participants are much more open and are able to provide a discourse that otherwise might be stifled. Therefore, this approach was particularly useful because of the type of sample used where it was necessary to explore and discuss very sensitive and personal aspects of the participant's biographies without feeling the need to follow a more scripted approach. Also because of my own position as an ex-prisoner, it enabled a flow of conversation which put both myself and the interviewees at ease. I made sure I built a rapport before the interview began by engaging in informal conversations unrelated to the study. In most cases, I stayed overnight in the location where the participants were living and were raised. This gave me a feel of the areas they were brought up and how they lived.

Interviews lasted approximately one hour to 90 minutes; were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim and then coded on completion of the interviews. The participants were fully debriefed and given the opportunity to ask questions, give feedback and raise any concerns or issues. Coding was conducted by searching for patterns that ran through the narrative which were emergent and could therefore be further analysed. The participants were also told that they would be sent a summary of the findings once they were completed. Originally, I had planned to conduct online interviews with participants overseas but decided after conducting 24 interviews that I had reached my limit. This decision was made due to the richness of the data and therefore it seemed unnecessary to continue any further. Lewis et al. (2014), assert that while online methods may have its advantages for reaching participants who are geographically dispersed, there are also limitations such as whether online methods can provide the data necessary for the study. Also, people may present themselves differently online. Sanders (2005) who conducted a study of the sex industry using mainly face-to-face interviews and some online methods found that email interviews were an inadequate replacement

for face-to-face interviews because it was difficult to foster rapport or explore sensitive issues via email (Sanders, 2005, as cited in Ritchie et al. 2014, P.60).

There is also the depth of interaction between myself and the participants that need to be addressed. Because of the nature of this study which involved delving into sensitive areas, social cues such as voice, intonation, and body language, gave me a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the participant on a question (Opdenakker, 2006). Some of the participants became very emotional during the interviews and some began crying. Because I was there in person, I was able to observe body language and get a feel of the participant's sadness as well as pride.

3.4.5 Ethical considerations

Prior to conducting the interviews, signed informed consent forms were signed by the participants giving their permission or declining to take part in the study. They were given sufficient information enabling them to make a decision on whether they wished to take part or not (Ritchie, et al., 2014). This included the purpose of the research and its aims: (1) the identity of the researcher; (2) that the participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time; (3) what participating will involve (interviews); (4) how long the interviews would be and what topics would be covered; (5) whether and how data would be kept confidential and anonymity maintained (ibid, p.80).

They were told that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point and that all data held on that particular man or woman would be destroyed. The participants were made at ease by engaging in some general conversation and establishing some rapport. They were informed of my interest in this particular subject matter and advised that during the interview, they were not obliged to respond to any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. They were also told that if at any stage they felt distressed, the interview could be stopped. In the event of this, they would have been given the opportunity to compose themselves and when ready, asked if they wanted to continue with the interview, reschedule for another day or withdraw from the study. During the interviews, I became

sensitive to changes in some of the participant's emotional state and was ready to stop. I merely told them to take their time and asked if they were happy to continue. Procedures were in place to deal with any distress exhibited, especially due to the sensitive and emotive nature of the subject being investigated. For example, the participants received a full debriefing post interview and were offered a list of independent counsellors. Some of them were already receiving counselling from professional bodies, the rest did not feel this was necessary.

All the participants were informed that the research may appear in scientific publications, to which consent would be requested. To preserve participant anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used. Ellard-Gray et al. (2015) explain that maintaining anonymity and confidentiality can be problematic when using snowball or chain-referral sampling - where each participant has been referred. Therefore, I have masked the identity of any persons, places or events referred to in the interviews that could compromise the participant's identities. Each of the transcript documents were saved on a password protected computer and memory stick only known to the myself.

This section incorporates several areas of research design including my ontological position as an 'insider' with personal experience as an ex-offender and prisoner and how this impacted on the study. It also explained the sampling process and how because of the sensitivity of the sample, snowball sampling was the most suited sampling method. The interview process explains how the semi-structured approach enabled some level of structure but also allowed for a reciprocal discussion to evolve. The interview process consisted of seven broad research topics that shaped the interviews and finally ethical considerations were explained as an essential process where potential issues needed to be addressed because of the sensitive nature of the research. It explains the recruitment process of issuing consent forms and information about the purpose of the research including its aims; the identity of the researcher; that it was voluntary; what participating involved; how long the interviews would be; what topics would be covered; whether and how data would be kept confidential and that anonymity would be maintained.

3.5 Data analysis

The analysis design was based upon the use of “thematic networks”, which are used to organise, structure, illustrate and represent the themes within the data. Transcriptions were coded to identify events, thoughts and biographies of the participant’s initial transitions towards desistance and transformations. Miles & Huberman’s (1994) recommended method is that researchers create a provisional list of codes before fieldwork, that are generated from the literature, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, research questions and so forth. Such coding categories were formulated prior to data collection, and supplemented and amended during and after that phase of the fieldwork. Interviews were fully transcribed, manually coded and thematically analysed to draw out extant and emerging themes. For example, how education can transform the self and how education can aid desistance. Secondly, there was the relation between female criminality and the harsher treatment towards them by the criminal justice system. And as a result, this led to the labelling of women as ‘double deviants’. The links between dysfunctional childhood backgrounds as a causal link to deviant behaviours were also extant themes as was how desistance can negotiate self-change (Aresti, et al., 2010).

The central theme that emerged was the conflict within the transformation process of the self which provides a critique of desistance theories which led to the research question refocussing (King & Horrocks, 2010). As outlined earlier, the conceptual frameworks I used to make sense of my data included the cognitive transformation theory of desistance (Giordano et al., 2002) to analyse the participant’s subjective trajectories. Informal social control theories which include external influences such as the prison environment (Sykes, 1958), employment (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Sampson & Laub 2003); university (Reuss, 1997; Darke & Aresti, 2016) and reintegrating into conventional society (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2016) also provided an analysis of emerging themes. Emerging themes also included stages of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014) and how this underexplored concept is practically absent within many desistance studies. It also emerged how desistance is often subordinate to change (Colman & Vander Laenen, 2012) when in fact desistance is in many ways more about identity transformation and a divorcing from former identities (Stevens, 2011). As

mentioned earlier, Braun & Clarke (2006) argue that themes which emerge from the data are inherently flawed as they deny the active role played by the researcher in the identification of such themes. But my study demonstrates my active role through the shared insider/outsider narrative and how my insider position in fact became the most active aspect of the study. The data which emerged was as a result my active probing and analysis of the data (Ely et al., 1997, pp.205-206, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Therefore, in summary, a thematic analysis approach was used to analyse extant themes which existed prior to analysis of the data which in this study include the concepts that are introduced in the literature review. Because of my insider knowledge I was already aware of the extant themes which included the challenges of attempting to reintegrate, find employment and so forth. I was aware of the differences to how female offenders were treated by the criminal justice system in relation to their male counterparts. And the overall stigmatisation, labelling, discrimination and rejection experienced by ex-offenders. I was able to pinpoint and develop further analysis of several emerging themes. Emerging themes were explored from the symbolic interactionist perspective of desistance – the cognitive transformation theory (Giordano et al., 2002) by identifying gaps within the literature that could be associated to cognitive shifts. The cognitive transformation theory is a desistance model which provided a conceptual framework from which to explore the participant's transitions which include (1) a general cognitive openness to change; (2) exposure and reaction to 'hooks for change' or turning points; (3) the envisioning of an appealing and conventional 'replacement self'; (4) a transformation in the way the desister views deviant behaviour. In other words, the transformative process eventually leads to a less favourable perspective of deviance. With this in mind, I was able to identify emerging themes that relate to the transformative process which included (1) liminality and the recurring stages of limbo the participants often found themselves; (2) The 'chicken and egg' factor where desistance was identified as being secondary to recovery (Colman & Vander Laenen, 2012); (3) and redeemability as an overall motivator towards identity transformation which was significant within gender distinctions in how male and females negotiate their identities through the redemptive self (Maruna, 2001).

3.6 Participant biographies

In this section I have included the 'Participants Biographies' including their demographics such as class, race, gender and sexuality. The participants identified their own class themselves when emphasising their pride about their humble beginnings or in some cases, their privileged backgrounds. They felt that their class was paramount to their identities, in particular in relation to 'Institutional habitus' and divided self where identities collide but also why their stories are significant as they feel compelled to help others who may feel that education.

Stacey, 26, was a white, middle class, heterosexual female and one of the youngest of the sample. She had the longest criminal record than the others with over 100 convictions which included mainly violence and criminal damage. In terms of desistance, Stacey's journey was unusual by the fact that she had desisted by her early twenties when criminal activities tend to be at their peak.

Judy, 41, a white, middle class, heterosexual female had spent time remanded in custody, had served a three-month prison sentence and spent time on probation for shop lifting. Since Judy was interviewed, she has since moved jobs since her interview but had made her career one that helps others from going along the same path as herself. This redemptive approach was distinctive for many of the others also and a main theme within this study.

Melody, 44, a white, working class, heterosexual female served four prison sentences for violence and fraud. She discovered she had been adopted around the age of six and relates this to her deviance. However, it would seem that it is socially linked but the important point is that for Melody this link to her birth family gives her sense of identity.

Charlie, 40, was a white, middle class, heterosexual male who served a three-year prison sentence for wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm. He has struggled to acknowledge his offence and feels shame and guilt over it. He comes from a tightly knit and supportive family which has helped him to rebuild his life. Charlie had gained a degree in criminology before he offended which was related to his work with probation. Prison gave him a new and more positive perspective of his clients. He is now working towards a doctorate.

Dylan, 27, was a white working class, heterosexual male who served prison time for drug dealing and violence. He came from a family who were involved in criminality and had a difficult start at university after disclosing his past during a seminar. He eventually graduated with a degree in criminology and has continued to postgraduate study. Dylan has had to struggle against his past and present barriers but as this study has demonstrated he has shown resilience which was developed from education and overcoming hardships.

Ruby, 40, was a white, working class, heterosexual female who served time in prison for shop lifting, and assault involved in the sex industry and was a drug user. She now works with other individuals with substance abuse issues. It was

essential for Ruby to demonstrate her independence and gain a degree in criminology and sustain successful employment.

Sid, 47, was a white, working class, heterosexual male involved in using and dealing drugs for which he served three years imprisonment. He is a university lecturer and a Convict Criminologist who gained a degree in criminology and continued his education to doctoral level. Sid is active in prisoner and desistance research and has been instrumental in networking and mentoring of other individuals who have left prison.

Debbie, 42, was a white, working class, heterosexual female who was sentenced to 18 months in prison for theft from her employer. Education enabled Debbie to transform her life where she has now become an entrusted and successful employee working with ex-offenders, homeless and substance users.

Jimmy, 47, was a Scottish white, working class, heterosexual male and served four prison sentences, the last being for five years. He admittedly, has never fully desisted but no longer commits acts of violence. He became teetotal many years ago as this was his main offending trigger. He has now succeeded in gaining a degree in design and continues to find new projects and enjoys being dad to his small boy.

Frank, 34, was a Scottish white, working class, heterosexual male sentenced to two years imprisonment for drug possession. He was involved in gang violence for many years which involved drugs. He later gained a degree in sports science and is now self-employed running his own gymnasium. Being his own boss has helped him to transform his life and others who he helps with health and fitness.

Len, 48, was an English, white, working class, heterosexual male who served a life sentence for murder and continues to deal with the psychological problems that led to his offence. Len has had many internal issues to deal with and even felt education was more of a curse as it opened his eyes to the cruel world he once inhabited. Education however still gives him a goal to succeed and he continues his education which he feels has given him structure.

Chloe, 38, was an English, white, middle class, heterosexual female was sentenced to six years in prison but did not want to disclose any details of why she was imprisoned because of the traumatic memories it invokes. At the time of writing she worked for a prison reform charity but has since moved jobs. She has been successful in higher education gaining both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Chloe is a very independent feminist who found when through a process of self-discovery through education which enabled her to develop her own voice and position.

Tom, 60, was an English, white, middle class, heterosexual male sentence to 10 years imprisonment for repeated sex offences. Since leaving prison, he has made progress in academe which boosted his self-esteem and gave him the confidence to confront his past. And although he has experienced more restrictions than anyone else due to the nature of his offences, he feels that higher education enabled a complete transformation of self.

Paul, 34, was an English, white, working class, homosexual male and was sentenced to three and a half years for actual bodily harm assaults, supplying

controlled drugs and thefts of obtaining cash by deception. Since his interview for this study, Paul has been sentenced to 10 months for theft. The core of Paul's offending was his identity crisis. Prison enabled him to use his previous education for the benefit of himself and others as he was in demand by the prison education department. Although he did not continue with education after prison, education helped develop his new sense of self during his imprisonment.

Carla, 22, was an English white, middle class, lesbian female who was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for perverting the course of justice (a false rape allegation). She also had substance and alcohol abuse issues and also struggled with her own identity as a lesbian woman. She found prison liberating as she was able for the first time in her life to explore and express her sexuality with other women. She now works with a major charity that helps other individuals who are experiencing the same issues.

Gerry, 36, was a white, English working class, heterosexual male and was what traditional sociologists would have predicted as a typical recidivist who continued to re-offend, deliberately choosing deviant behaviour [which included drug dealing] over legitimate means. But although there were predictors and causality of his offending, in the existential sense, he used free will to choose his lifestyle until he decided to stop. He has since worked for the council and has been successful with continual employment.

Clarissa, 41, was a white, English, working class, heterosexual female who was in custody 11 times for offences ranging from shop lifting and possession to driving while disqualified. She has continued to work for the Council and has enjoyed delivering guest talks to college students about her previous struggle with substance abuse. Clarissa was a victim of child sexual abuse and later developed drug issues. Education provided her with opportunities not least, including accommodation where she was able to escape a volatile relationship.

Germaine, 29, was a white, English, working class, heterosexual female who was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for drugs offences. She was a high profile case because of the severity of her family's criminal activities which made it difficult for her to hide her past. Germaine is interested in fashion and design which led to her gaining a degree. She has financial struggles which at the time of the interview were preventing her continuing on to postgraduate study.

Gemma, 34, a white, English, working class, heterosexual female is a former drug user who now works with individuals with substance abuse issues. Despite this, she has experienced a lot of stigma and discrimination from the area she grew up in and is known for her former offending. She began a Leadership and Management degree but only completed part of it as she gained employment.

Tariq, 28, was an English born Asian, middle class, heterosexual male and was the only ethnic minority in the sample yet his narrative still provided an interesting insight into some of the cultural differences for desisters. He had good support from his family which is supported by other desistance studies (Calverley, 2009). Tariq was also one of the few who already had a university degree before he went to prison. He continues with education and has been involved in local community police initiatives.

Val, 44, was a white, English, middle class heterosexual female who was a long-term prisoner some of which was in the US system. She was sentenced to 13 years for her involvement with drugs. Val's treatment by the criminal justice system may be seen as harsh because of the severity of her sentence compared to her male counterpart. She went to study for a degree in landscape gardening and at the time of the interview was aiming to set up her own business.

Ju Ju, 67, was a white, English, middle class heterosexual male who was sentenced to seven years and six months for statutory rape. He was British born but has resided in New Zealand most of his life. He was the oldest of the sample and has enjoyed a lifetime career as a psychologist and researcher. Education has been an important part of his life before and after prison which has enabled him to immediately overcome the barriers that others have encountered during their entry into university.

Peter, 58, was a white, English, middle class, heterosexual male sentenced to three months in the 1980s for incitement to commit arson. He came from a privileged background and had a very good early education. Peter did not have an ongoing criminal lifestyle and therefore felt somewhat unrepresentative for this study. Although during his early years he was sent to prison this was more of a mere glitch during his more rebellious teens. He has continued to become successful in academe and contributes to criminological research.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the design of the research and also discussed how the shape of the study changed over time. My own identification with the group ensured that I was able to build trusting relationships and this allowed for the collection of rich data. I was aware that my own position as a researcher influenced the data I collected but, through sharing my story as a former prisoner, I was treated as an 'insider'. I have outlined the importance of taking a symbolic interactionist approach in order to gain a real insight into the complex factors of identity transformation. In addition, because of the snowball sampling approach, there was the potential that might raise concern about anonymity and so I took every precaution possible to maintain anonymity. The overall approach to data collection was driven by a desire hear the live experiences of other ex-prisoners who had followed the same pathway as myself. Therefore, my emphasis was on listening to the stories that the participants in my study were telling me. The use of narrative interviews and discussion groups ensured that people had the opportunity to be heard but care was needed because of the vulnerability of some of the participants.

In terms of the methodologies for this study, the ontology is about how the participants exist in the world and how this is analysed through their narratives and speech. The interpretative approach was the most solid epistemological approach because of the emphasis on theories of the self and the participants own interpretative process throughout their journeys. The 'insider' researcher positionality provided me with a strong basis whereby experience informs theoretical approaches towards the understanding of human interactions and personal experience. Whether subjective or objective, however, the views and interpretations of the insider is inevitably affected by the experiences, knowledge, and understanding derived from years of living with, and among, criminals and inmates. This is an important point because an ex-prisoner's insight of imprisonment; stigma, labelling, the desistance process and the transformation of self is developed through experience which can therefore create bias. It was essential to be mindful of the possibility of bias through continual self-reflection and understanding of its potential pitfalls. Yet while these potential flaws exist, the methodology and methods adopted for this study were the most suitable approaches. Finally, this chapter provided a snapshot introduction of the participant's biographies which demonstrates the range of offences and backgrounds of each individual.

Chapter 4: Crisis and Equilibrium

4.1 Introduction

There are several paradoxes within the psychosocial process which begins with an existential crisis of the self (Butenaite et al. 2016) as a result of incarceration and while this may sound bleak, many individuals discover this to be their catalyst for change (Giordano et al. 2002). That said, having been in prison is partly what also contributes to the unending psychosocial issues caused by a myriad of experiences such as mental health issues, stigma, rejections and periods of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014). Despite this, the participants in this study were able to overcome these challenges and succeed in both education and employment but as they became upwardly socially mobile, they experienced what Bourdieu refers to as a divided self or *habitus clive* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) where one's biographical history and current status collide and become split (see chapter 2). This is partially why a complete transformation of self is not possible because individuals are constantly encountering crises that unbalance their equilibrium.

Not everyone found their calling during their time in prison, but it was a life changing experience for those who did and yet this is something rarely discussed within the literature. Prisons and desistance has a place within desistance studies (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016), but it is a largely unspoken aspect of desistance which tends to focus mainly on ex-prisoners/offender's trajectories, yet it has been long documented that prison can lead to desistance and self-transformation (Giordano et al. 2002). This is an alternative argument to the total institution (Goffman, 1961) concept of identity loss, instead suggesting that prison can and does in many cases build new pro-social identities. Another contrasting perspective of the total institution concept is that while prisoners are developing new identities during their time of incarceration, universities are becoming more punitive and controlling which impacts greatly on those from the marginalised backgrounds who are beginning to feel more dejected (see Prisoners' Education Trust, 2017).

Another paradox of the total institution concept entertains the possibility of implementing a culture of desistance within prisons (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016) which provokes an argument for prisons to acknowledge the early stages of desistance and to develop a mindset that can accommodate it (Schinkel, 2015; McNeill & Schinkel, 2016). To seek out evidence that this could work, the idea of desistance and prisons can be further explored by analysing the success of open prisons which are geared towards resettlement, trust and freedom (Aresti & Darke, 2015).

Elements of desistance in prisons can be seen through successful education amongst prisoners and the development of 'prisoner learner identities' which is a major aspect of the early desistance process. This can be seen through the lens of education which becomes the main initial 'hook for change' and later a conduit towards a better life. As discussed earlier, a foreboding sense of crises can lead to an initial 'openness for change' (Giordano et al. 2002), but as Laub & Sampson (1993; 2003) argue, there are many hooks over a life span which they refer to as 'turning points'. Following a sense of crises which evokes an initial 'hook for change' (Giordano et al. 2002) education becomes the participant's lifeline which was initially facilitated and supported by the prison education department.

The 'conflicted self' highlights the prison habitus with its internal conflicts where identities and beliefs are shaped by the dispositions embedded within prison culture (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). For some, this was exacerbated by fear which Sykes (1958, p.78) refers to as a 'deprivation of security' where men are housed for years with other men with violent dispositions. But for some of the individuals in this study, this fear was further exacerbated because of how their sexual orientation might be viewed by other prisoners which caused internal conflict on their sense of self.

Perspectives of existential crises (Butenaite et al. 2016); cognitive transformations (Giordano et al. 2002) and primary desistance (Farrall & Maruna, 2004) within the prison environment (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016) as well as Goffman (1961) and Sykes (1958) total institutions and liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014) contribute towards developing the initial stages of a psychosocial model of the self. Despite the positive experiences of imprisonment which enable self-change, it can also

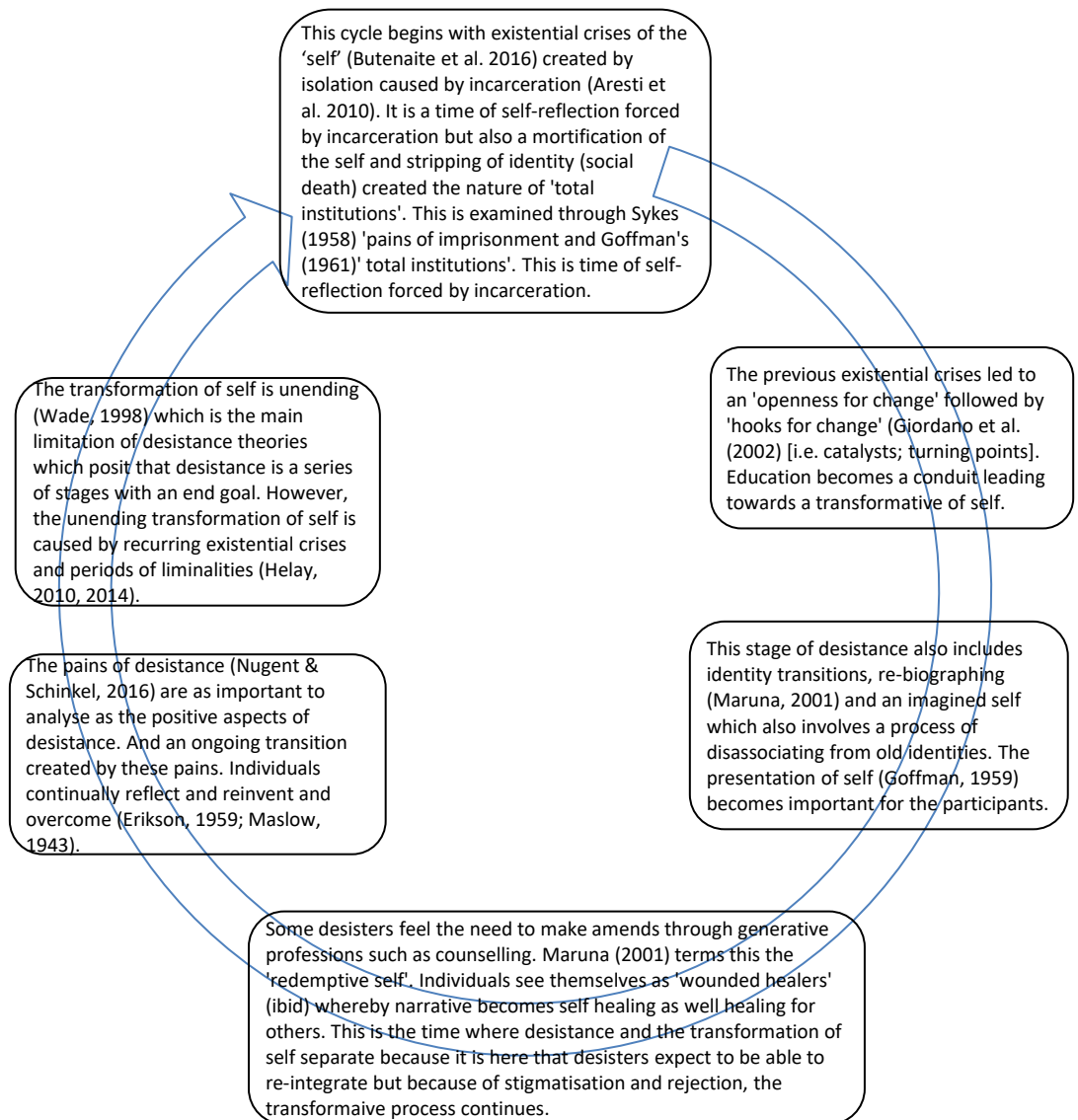
become a self fulfilling prophecy whereby a prison record also leads to barriers and an unending transformation of self within the psychosocial process.

4.2 The psychosocial model of the self

Below (see Fig. 1) is an overview of the psychosocial process of the self beginning with early existential crises (Butenaite et al. 2016); cognitive transformations (Giordano et al. 2002) and the reconstruction of new identities (Maruna, 2001). The dichotomy between the desistance process and transformation of self is demonstrated within the above diagramme which was developed from a central question of how experiences of higher education among ex-prisoner's impact upon the path to desistance (Darke & Aresti, 2010). This is outlined in chapter two, as a critique of the desistance theory where I began to develop the psychosocial model to present my own findings which incorporates existentialist crises (Butenatie et al. 2016), cognitive theories (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna, 2001) and social theory (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). But as specified throughout this thesis, this study draws heavily on desistance components to underpin the movement towards self-change rather than desistance 'from crime' being used as an explanation of how and why individuals move away from criminal activity. In other words, for some, desistance from crime might be possible and their identity transformations too, but some continue to be excluded from society which prevents a complete transformation of self.

Additionally, I argue that the desistance process includes other components that are not related specifically to 'crime abstinence' such as a desistance of identities (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) and in this study, these were the most crucial elements which higher education projected (although there still remain ongoing conflicts because of their habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) and also education has its limitations for some). In other words, for some, desistance from crime might be possible and their identity transformations too, but some continue to be excluded from society which prevents a complete transformation of self.

Fig. 1: Diagram of the psychosocial model of the self



4.3 Paradoxes of total institutions

There has been a recurring finding in previous studies that some prisoners regard their imprisonment as their catalyst to change (Giordano, et al., 2002) which is a far cry from what imprisonment is designed to do yet as history tells us, prison does not work for the majority and therefore, perhaps there is an argument then that if prison works for some then it could be designed to work for all. Prison does not work in relation to rehabilitation because of overcrowding, violence, bullying, mental health issues and the whole structure of a prison, yet individuals are finding their hooks for change while serving prison sentences and the reason for this is because they are removed from their overwhelming situations. Prison is designed to remove people from society for the safety of the rest of the population but for many prisoners being removed from society enables them to reflect and reinvent themselves.

Recent work by Schinkel (2015); McNeill & Schinkel (2016) and McLean et al. (2017) of Scottish prisons have studied the concept of desistance in prison which until recently has been neglected in the literature yet is something worth exploring because if prisoners are able to find some kind of defining moment (Aresti, 2010) in prison then it is not only possible to nurture but essential (McNeill, 2016). University and prison were the two most influential institutions on the participant's lives both of which demonstrated punitiveness and control but also allowed opportunities of enrichment which this section discusses interchangeably. Scott's (2015) reinventive institution concept (see chapter 2) offers a contemporary and contrasting perspective of Goffman's (1961) total institution but as the evidence suggests, the paradox is now widening with the increasing punitiveness of universities and reinventive approach by prisons.

This chapter will analyse these findings through this ambivalence of the total institution concept (Goffman, 1961) using the contemporary example of Scott's (2015) reinventive institution and how the total institution concept is becoming increasingly diverse. Scott argues that universities are becoming reinventive institutions but does not address the difficulties faced by university students from marginalised groups. It could however be argued that some prisons are becoming reinventive as evidenced through the prison to college collaborations (see chapter 2). Although there is much need of further research into the area of prisons in

relation to self-improvement, it contradicts two influential and parallel concepts of Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment and Goffman's (1961) total institution which substantiate a personal crisis where identities are stripped by a ceremonious removal of links to family, employment, education, and replaced with a stigmatised status. Their theories were referring to prisons and hospitals in the 1950s and 60s but over half a century later, the data in this study and increasing supporting evidence (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2017) suggests that modern universities are now displaying signs of the total institution through their treatment of people with convictions.

Charlie, 40, who already held a degree in criminology before he offended, was imprisoned shortly before graduating with a master's degree, and as a consequence of his conviction, the university he was studying at suggested he resigned from his studies.

Charlie: I'd done enough to get my masters at the university [who] said basically, I had to resign. In some ways I had brought shame on myself and the university, so I wasn't awarded the masters.

DH: So, you had done the education and achieved master's level, but they wouldn't award you because you'd committed this offence?

Charlie: They asked me to [pause]. I was either going to be expelled from the university or I was going to be [pause] or I had to resign, and my course director said: "resign".

Charlie's narrative corresponds with Goffman's (1961) claim that the process of incarceration and the stripping away of identity created by the nature of the total institution, involves a removal of family links, employment, education which are all replaced with a stigmatised status. Charlie was rejected by his university which is an expected consequence of becoming convicted of a crime but additionally he was refused his master's degree for which he says he had earned. It could therefore be argued that although the loss of liberty and autonomy was an expected consequence of being sent to prison, the universities decision to force Charlie to leave and reject his degree was additionally stigmatising (Goffman, 1962). In other words, prison was an unavoidable consequence for Charlie, whereas his university made an informed decision to reject him. Moreover, Charlies experiences in prison subsequently led towards a more positive sense of self than the experiences he had at the university at which he had been studying. Leese (2010, p.242) describes universities as having a 'rigid structure' that is biased in favour of certain social groups. And though she is referring to class

divisions, the rigidity of the ‘institutional habitus’ that exists within universities has more recently been identified as an increasing problem in relation to the way they sometimes treat prospective students with convictions (Prisoners Education Trust, 2017).

Sid, 47, is a university lecturer who gained a degree in criminology and continued his education to doctoral level. He is active in prisoner and desistance research and has been instrumental in networking and the mentoring of other individuals who have left prison. Sid agrees that universities are changing:

Sid: I think maybe university is liberal minded, but they are getting worse now. I think we (himself and his colleagues) have recently written a paper about how the society is getting worse. In terms of the risk and so with university as well, I imagine it will be harder for people. At the end of the day if you’ve got people [pause] if five of us have gone for a job - me you and three other people - that haven’t got a past like us, that are equally as qualified, publish the same papers got exactly the same thing except for that tick on the box (stating a criminal record), it’s easier I guess for them to go for that person, but they won’t be as [pause] I don’t think they will have our personalities David.

This suggests increasing concerns around safety and provides a nuanced variation to Scott’s (2015) notion of reinventive institution (see chapter 2). For example, as mentioned earlier, Scott offers a contemporary and contrasting perspective of the total institution arguing that universities are ‘designed to educate, enrich and develop people’s talents or abilities, but as we can see, their approach is sometimes punitive towards individuals. Scott’s notion helps to put this debate to the forefront with a critical assessment of the total institution concept in relation to universities. But this punitive approach did not hold the participants back as they continued towards succeeding in their aspirations. The strength of character they displayed to overcome such barriers corresponds with Scott’s argument that the model of the total institution as outlined in Goffman’s *Asylums* has been misinterpreted as rendering its inmates powerless, where in fact they also demonstrated agency through gestures of resistance.

The participant’s positive experiences of imprisonment is also consistent with Mouzelis (1971) who is equally critical of Goffman’s interpretation of the subservient inmate arguing that inmates may have found hospital admission as a welcome relief. This parallels with the thread of this study, that some individuals

may find imprisonment to be an escape - even a relief and a place where they can find self-improvement.

Scott's analysis provides a useful lens through which to examine how the participant's in this study demonstrated their own independence and resistance against the 'institutional habitus' of prison life. But while this study supports Scott's notion of reinventive institution, it also proposes a nuance to her examples of reinventive institution, by arguing that prisons could also be examples of reinventive institution while universities are increasingly developing characteristics of the total institution by becoming increasingly controlling towards staff members and students as seen from Charlie's and Sid's earlier narratives (Grove , 2016). But perhaps the landscape is changing as universities become increasingly concerned about safeguarding. Recently, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded £2.45 million under its Catalyst Fund towards 63 projects addressing sexual harassment on campus. This is in response to Universities UK's Harassment Taskforce report on the need for universities and colleges to do more to address this problem and have since issued a further call for projects to tackle hate crime and online harassment (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2017)

This ambivalence between prisons and universities offers an alternative perspective to the notion of 'institutional habitus' (see chapter 2) which purports prisons have embedded dispositions from a history of violence and staff/prisoner power struggles (McDermott & King, 1988). But in some ways many prisons are trying to move away from the institutional habitus linked to their troubled history and more towards being reinventive institutions which can be seen through their introduction of prison to college programmes. Yet while universities are in collaboration with these programmes their institutional habitus is now becoming more prevalent in how they treat people with convictions wishing to enter university (Prisoners Education Trust , 2017).

Some of the participants in this study were scrutinised by official panels such as in Debbie's case which will be discussed in detail in chapter 6, where she recalls: 'I got pulled into the office with the head and three people while they scrutinised me.' Some of the participants were even refused entry by certain universities. Goffman's (1961) definition of a total institution could be applied to universities:

‘... a place of residence and work where a large number of situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable length of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life (Goffman, 1961, p. xiii).’ But it is not just universities, because as this study will later demonstrate, there is evidence of constant attacks on the participant’s sense of self and identities from different agencies including prisons, medical surgeries, probation services, and colleges as well as universities (Pike, 2014). Therefore we can see that there is a mixture of both punitive and transformative approaches by both prisons and universities embedded within an institutional habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

Charlie was already struggling with some difficult personal issues but after he committed his offence, he became ostracised and stigmatised by both his employers and his university. We know from his narrative below that his life had already taken a turn for the worse with an attempted suicide because of depression:

Charlie: I was a broken man and the fear of custody and what I imagined prison life to be like was driving me to... I slashed my wrists, which I never thought would ever happen because of the fear of going to prison. The actual reality of it was, yeah it was again I could talk a lot about it, but I had people who looked out for me and who I became friends with and who supported me.

This narrative explains the impact of crisis on Charlie’s sense of self and a fear that is so destructive, it leads him to self-harm but as we can see from the following narrative, this experience results in Charlie forging new alliances where he then begins to reassess how he views himself. This transformation can be analysed from the symbolic interactionist perspective (Mead, 1934, 1964) whereby Charlie’s view of himself begins to mirror how others view him (see Cooley, 1902).

Charlie: I am convinced in my own mind that I am a very decent person. I am convinced in my own mind that I will continue to fight against this stigma, and to fight for other people who have to face these ignorant comments.

This transitional stage also supports Scott’s earlier claim that rather than individuals being passive and lacking autonomy as proposed by the concept of ‘total institutions’ (Goffman, 1961) Charlie is resistant against stigmatisation and

discrimination (Jefferson, 2002). He also begins a transition towards his 'core self' or 'real me' which Maruna's (2001) explains as something which is distinct from the person who committed crimes in their past (p.131). This will be discussed further in chapter 5 but in short, it is a process of re-biographing identities which corresponds with the participant's transformations of self. And therefore, although Charlie's crises continues to cause him inner conflict due to him being unable to distance his current self from his past self, he begins to develop a network of support and so gradually begins to view himself more positively and re-connect to his 'core' self (ibid).

Charlie: I basically stabbed my girlfriend and I had attempted suicide on the three days before it happened. I had a nervous breakdown, I was studying at university and had some very difficult things going on in my life that had resulted in some bizarre behaviour and pressure and things and, yes it wasn't planned. Even the probation officer said that it wasn't something I did and something I hope not to repeat.

Charlie's probation officer identifies his behaviour as 'not something he does' and through his narrative, he begins to connect with what his probation officer's says and disassociate himself from the person who stabbed his girlfriend. Despite this, Charlie was going through some difficult emotions which later led to him self-harming while in prison, yet it was also the prison environment which provided place and space for him to re-evaluate his sense of self:

Charlie: I got on with well with a lot of the lads in there and the prison staff were supportive, and because I think they realised that something had gone horribly wrong, and I learned, so at times it was horrific but I also gained a lot from prison as well.

Although Charlie's fear of prison led him to self-harm, he developed a support network from both prison staff and prisoners which enabled him to experience a positive experience from his time in prison which casts a different light on the notion of institutional habitus as discussed in the literature review. In other words, the effects of imprisonment become an individual experience and challenge that is unique to each individual and how they cope with their individual crises.

Charlie was and continues to be traumatised by the severity of his offence and the events that led up to it – a period where he describes himself as a 'broken man'.

His crisis of the self had developed before being sent to prison and though this was increased by the added fear of prison life, it was the experiences of prison that eventually led to a positive transformation. It should be noted that in cases such as Charlie's, there is no doubt that desistance from crime was not a priority towards his transition because he was not a persistent offender (Maruna, 2001). In other words, the core objective of desistance being that individuals abstain from crime was not necessary for Charlie, but rather the need for a change in how he views himself (see McNeill, 2016). Charlie is now working towards a doctorate degree, but continues to struggle with his 'ex-offender' identity, although his gradual transformation through education is progressive. He also comes from a tightly knit circle of supportive family and friends which has helped him to rebuild his life.

Prison created a set of crises which then added further conflict to the participant's already unresolved issues, but as we shall see in this chapter, prison enabled some to disassociate themselves from the crises associated with their lives outside of prison. For example, Debbie was a 42-year-old manager within a charity organisation that supports ex-offenders and others with substance abuse issues and homelessness. She received 18 months imprisonment for theft from her previous employer but her time in prison was a period of transformation which enabled her to escape the crises within her life but also make life changing decisions for the future.

Syke's pains of imprisonment and Goffman's (1961) total institution concepts provide a useful lens through which to analyse the crises caused by imprisonment. In his classic text: *The Society of Captives*, Syke's (1958) describes the concept of crisis as something often viewed as unexpected including abrupt shifts and hurried action and claims violence (e.g. prison riots) as being the most dramatic crises in prison. However, this study argues that it is the psychosocial experiences accumulated by a crisis of the self and the pains of imprisonment as being the most dramatic set of disorders for the participants in this study. Sykes (1958) highlighted a series of personal deprivations that create a crisis and that have a demeaning impact on the self, including the 'deprivation of goods and services'; the 'deprivation of liberty'; the 'deprivation of heterosexual relationships'; the 'deprivation of autonomy' and the 'deprivation of security' and how attacks on the prisoner's ego and sense of self-worth were fundamental to incarceration (see chapter 2).

Debbie felt that the worst part of imprisonment was being separated from her daughter which like Charlie, corresponds with Goffman's (1961) link between the mortification of self and losing links with family members. Yet as mentioned earlier, Debbie found prison to be an escape which provided her with a more structured life by removing the burdens that were dominating her existence outside and provided space where she was able re-evaluate her life and sense of self. Education enabled Debbie to transform her life where she has now become an entrusted and successful employee. However, her journey to a better life began while she was in prison. This was Debbie's response when she was asked what being prison was like for her:

Debbie: Do you know, this is awful. I didn't find it [prison] bad. Because I got took away from what I'd done [crime]. So the actual people that were suffering on the outside was my child, my mum, my brother - all good people. All never done anything wrong. Hard working people were left with gossip and I was took away with it. By the time I got out of it, newspaper - chippy wrapping. Trying to move on from that is a different story, but I think they had the worst ride than me. I went there [prison] expecting something like 'Bad Girls' [TV women's prison series].

Debbie identifies with those she left behind and is able to understand how prison affects the loved ones of prisoners, but how she needed a period to self-reflect. She also makes reference to how life became a struggle once she had left the structured existence in prison. The benefits of routine and structure within prison is emphasised when one considers how ex-prisoners revert to the lifestyle that led them to prison in the first instance. Prison became transformative for Debbie as it enabled her to reflect while she was removed from her difficult predicament outside, but similarly to Charlie, it was unlikely that she would need to desist from crime because she was not a persistent offender (Maruna, 2001). These stories are consistently about transforming lives rather than needing to resist criminal behaviour. It is about identity shifts, cognitive changes and making plans for a new future.

Debbie gives a detailed account here about how she felt guilty that her prison time did not feel like punishment and gives an important insight into the process of self-mortification (Goffman, 1961) to a realisation that prison can be a place of transition to a better self. Following on from her previous narrative where she

said it was awful that she did not find prison bad, she was encouraged to explain further why she thought it was ‘awful’ that prison was not a bad experience:

Debbie: It didn’t feel like a punishment.

DH: And should it have?

Debbie: Yes of course it should! I think I’d done something wrong, I should be punished! But what happened is you suddenly get somewhere. You’ve no worries, you’ve no bills to pay and you’re not worrying about the rift. You do worry about your child. That’s the bit I miss - is that I was taken away from my child. That was the punishment! That was the worst part of it! I missed Christmas! I missed her birthday!

DH: So you were being punished then?

Debbie: Yes, that’s the punishment, but the actual...how you’re treated in prison wasn’t awful.

Debbie’s narrative extends the argument around the paradoxes of imprisonment through the different experiences of imprisonment by male and females. She discusses the impact mother and child separation has on women in prison which she emphasises as her ‘real’ punishment (Carlen & Worrall, 2004), but also, how prison provided some relief from the worries she had outside of prison. This is in line with Mouzelis’s (1971) earlier argument that the patients within Goffman’s (1961) study may have found hospitalisation a relief rather than a place of self-mortification as Goffman had argued. Prison can also become an escape and therefore can provide opportunities for some prisoners (see Duguid, 1986; McNeill, 2016). This supports the thread of this discussion that the transformative benefits of prison are not just about what prison can offer in terms of education and skills training, but also through its structure and routine (Pike, 2014). For some, prison offers routine and structure as well as time and space which can be enough for some prisoners to forge changes (Pike, 2014; Giordano et al., 2002). Prison became a period of self-reflecting where participants re-evaluated their lives and their plans for the future. The impact of having time to think in prison on the motivations to desist featured in many descriptions of the lived experiences of imprisonment.

The cognitive transformation desistance theory offers a useful framework from which to analyse the participant’s transitions and helps this study to develop the groundwork for a psychosocial model of the self by examining the interrelated components of cognitive shifts, social factors and individual thought and behaviours, which contribute a psychosocial process. The onset of trauma, fear

and crisis becoming the participant's catalyst for change is consistent with the cognitive transformation model within desistance studies and the concept of 'hooks for change' (Giordano, et al., 2002) or 'turning points' (Laub & Sampson, 1993). However, the participants experienced their catalysts while serving prison sentences as opposed to while attempting to reintegrate in to society which is where the majority of desistance studies are focussed. Secondly, it diverts from the premise that the individual must focus on leading a crime free existence but rather that the focus should be about the transformation of self.

Thirdly, this study also contradicts desistance theorist's argument that individuals must want to change with an emphasis on rational choice. It supports the argument that there must be an 'openness for change' but this is more about experiencing feelings and self-reflecting rather than making a conscious effort to make changes initially, but it does support the notion of making conscious changes in later stages of desistance. This is supported in Schinkel (2015) whose study on two prisoners showed that desistance did not rely primarily on a conscious decision to change but instead, factors beyond one's control have changed. One of their sample reported that their 'openness for change' happened through their experience of imprisonment rather than it being a conscious decision. In terms of desistance, those with resources on the outside did describe some self-determination to go straight, but they did not anticipate many problems in putting this decision in practice. Giordano et al. (2002) have also commented that those with the most resources do not have to rely on 'agentic moves' in order to desist (p.1026).

This section grappled with the concept of institutional paradoxes because of the self-contradictory evidence that in many cases, the experience of prison can help transform identities. Prisons are not designed to rehabilitate or assist prisoners to transform their lives but rather to punish but prisoners are finding ways of making prison work in their favour. For some, prison can enable a transformation towards university but there is increasing evidence that universities which are supposedly places of intellectual and personal development are becoming increasingly punitive. We saw this in Charlie's case where the university he was studying at suggested he withdrew from his course of study and left the university once they knew he had offended. Yet surprisingly and in complete contrast, for some of the

participants, including Charlie, prison became a relief and an escape from their difficult lives on the outside. This counters Susie Scott's (2015) reinventive institution concept (see chapter 2) which offers a contemporary and contrasting perspective of Goffman's (1961) total institution because as the evidence suggests, the paradox is now the increasing punitiveness of universities and reinventive experience of imprisonment. Also, as discussed in chapter 2 and furthermore in the next section, prisons have also gone much further recently by collaborating with universities to deliver university modules, therefore it is ironic that the place of punishment is encouraging higher education while universities are rejecting them.

4.4 Prisons and desistance

The catalyst for change created by experiences of imprisonment are the early stages of desistance and therefore there is an argument for prisons to adopt a desistance model through training staff, education, employment training, drugs rehabilitation, and probation services (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016) which are currently focussed on the risk level of prisoners re-offending. You will find that these are already available in prisons so why is the re-offending rate still a problem? The answer lies within communities and the attitudes of the public which is further accentuated by the media but also because the re-offending issue is related to short term prison sentences where prisoners cannot benefit from any long-term help. However, 18 months' imprisonment was a sufficient length of time to enable Debbie to reflect and transform her life. The main problem is outside of the prison walls where individuals struggle to reintegrate.

Successful reintegration for the participants in this study included enrolling into university but some were met with barriers from university admissions procedures which potentially could have been permanently damaging. This created an additional paradox in this study that while prisons offer time and space for change, universities are now becoming increasingly obstructive towards those with criminal convictions. Yet while they are collaborating with prisons by allowing students to study alongside prisoners, they are exploiting those involved in the development of prison to college programmes (see chapter 1). Ironically, though while imprisonment is sometimes the catalyst towards change, it will also be one of the reasons why successful desistance can never be accomplished.

Desistance in relation to imprisonment is a paradox because the two are usually not associated together. But in recent years the notion of a desistance approach in prisons has been addressed by desistance scholars such as Schinkel (2015) and McNeill & Schinkel (2016). Imprisonment involves a period of self-reflection which corresponds with the primary stages of desistance, not usually associated with prison but rather during early release from prison or while reintegrating back into society. This is a significant advancement in the knowledge of desistance in relation to the prison environment (Liebling, 2000; McNeill & Schinkel, 2014) because it suggests that if prison significantly evokes these early stages of desistance, there is an argument for prisons to adopt a desistance approach which caters for change - in particular, Giordano et al's (2002) cognitive transformative desistance approach.

Their study reported that some of their interviewees found their hooks for change during imprisonment, as did Aresti et al (2010) in their research of ex-prisoner's 'defining moments', but this transformative process can become hindered by a lengthy period of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014). Liminality is a consistent theme throughout this study which will be discussed in each chapter relating to different periods of the desistance process and the transforming self and even in the latter stages of transformation when a dislocation occurs within the participants social mobility causing a habitus clive (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Farrall & Calverley (2006) argue that they found it hard to find evidence which supports the notion that 'prison helps people stop offending by giving them "time out" or why it is that criminologists have done so little to bring an end to this myth'. And that instead, 'prison only serves to hinder desistance as it fails to provide a structure in which desistance-focused work is possible' (pp. 71-72). But far from being a myth, prison does help some the time and space to transform their lives and one of most influential processes that supports this transformation is education.

This study sits within both of these positions because although it argues that prison can force positive changes, it also argues that prisoners experience a period of liminality which becomes a crisis for prisoner's intent on desisting or being open to the possibility of desistance. Studies on prisons and desistance maybe be contentious amongst prison reformers and some desistance scholars (Farrall &

Calverley, 2006). But prisons have been actively involved in the process of desistance for decades within their open estates and therefore, this section begins by exploring open prisons in relation to their desistance approaches. However, there has been little if any empirical research around links between open prisons and desistance since Maguire & Raynor published their paper in 2006: 'How the resettlement of prisoners promotes desistance from crime: Or does it?'

Category D prisoners which are prisoners deemed as low risk and can serve their sentences in open prisons still encounter crises albeit a nuanced set of crises synonymous with being housed in open prisons. But also, how the open prison model is a reversal of Goffman's (1961) total institution concept in relation to the stripping of one's links to the outside world as discussed earlier. Prisoners housed in open prisons are able to work in the community, visit family on day release and start to reintegrate thus rebuilding relationships with family, friends and the community as a whole. Therefore, open prisons work in contrast to the total institution by offering measures of freedom and personal responsibility that are denied in closed prisons (Goffman, 1961). However, aspects of the open prison which is barely discussed is the hidden controlling factors which Shamas (2015) argues are uniquely suited to disciplining and controlling prison populations, crucially, by giving inmates something to lose and then threatening to take it away (p.3). The relevance of this topic is that open conditions provide a different set of crises that impact on a prisoner's sense of self.

In a 1976 talk on alternatives to imprisonment, Foucault took a distrustful view of open prisons, arguing that 'new methods that try to punish without imprisonment are basically a new and more efficient way of re-implementing the older functions of the carceral' (Shamas, 2015, p. 7). This links to the earlier discussion in chapter 2 about Scott's (2010) 'performative regulation' notion which argues that it is more than just disciplinary power imposed on docile bodies (see Foucault, 1977) for it demands the active involvement of individuals in the creation of their own regimes and adherence to them, as well as the mutual surveillance of members by their peers (as cited in Scott, 2010, p. 220). This links to Foucault's argument that 'individuals increasingly regulate themselves which is the premise of open prisons in that it operates mainly on trust. Without the physical controls that exist in other prisons, these institutions develop forms of control which are both instrumental (there are rewards and punishments attached to compliance) and

normative values of conformity and trust are fostered so that prisoners self-regulate' (Prison Service Journal, 2015, p. 2).

This contributes to the argument around the ambivalence of the total institution concept but also provides an important perspective usually absent within prison literature by examining how participants in open prisons experienced a different set of crises which impacts on their sense of selves. They experience different forms of control, higher expectations and the need to develop self-control that is usually enforced within secure prisons. Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment and Goffman's (1961) total institution can still be relevant to open prisons because of the strain of self-regulation. There is a great strain to follow the strict rules of open prisons because expectations are extremely high and there is always the underlying threat of being returned to secure prisons sometimes for quite meagre sanctions.

Dafydd is a 27-year-old postgraduate student who served 14 months imprisonment and was handed a four year driving ban for dangerous driving. He came from a stable middle-class background but as a youth had begun truanting with other school friends which was the start of his offending. He arrived at a D Category prison almost immediately after being convicted. Dafydd immediately experienced a privileged prisoner status because of his previous academic achievements and because he was also a full-time student at university.

It also created a difficult situation for him with other prisoners because he was looked upon favourably by the prison authorities which caused him to be alienated from his fellow prisoners which had a strong impact on his sense of self. Therefore, in a twist to the usual alienation and stigmatisation associated with the total institution (Goffman, 1961), Dafydd is being stripped of his identity as an accepted member of the prison subculture. Because of his education, he was given the privileged position in the library but this attracted the wrong type of attention. According to Dafydd, such a privileged position was usually given to sex offenders which put his safety at risk as well as alienating him from the others.

Dafydd: I was tarred with the same brush at first. Most of the camp (open prison) is very segmented. There's different units. They stick to themselves. Even going down for food I sort of couldn't talk to anyone, because I didn't really know them. But I would nod my head and everyone would look at me

or just ignore me. You could tell you were being ignored. It was only later when I realised that people had thought that I was the same (sex offender) because I worked in the library.

Therefore, while this study advocates the transformative benefits of education (Darke & Aresti, 2016), in Dafydd's case, education had disassociated him from the rest of the mainstream prison population. Fortunately, the prison adopted a zero-tolerance policy whereby, prisoners were instantly relocated to another prison if they attacked anyone.

Dafydd: When I was there one of the boys, one of the sex offenders was in the newspaper for being a sex offender. One of the normal prisoners (non-sex offender), you could say, cut the picture and the clipping out of the paper and stuck it on his door. The next day he was gone.

Although open prisons exercise strict control over prisoners with the constant threat of being returned to secure prisons (Shammas, 2015), as the above narrative shows, it is a necessary control for the safety of other prisoners and equilibrium of the running of these prisons. Dafydd was in his second year of a degree before going to prison but was imprisoned before he completed it. However, his academic abilities were immediately embraced by the prison education department.

Dafydd: When I arrived at the 'D' Cat prison, HM Prison, they processed me again and I had an education test. I was Level 3 in both of them. There was an Irish traveller next to me and the woman was asking us what level of education we had. I said I'm in my second year of university and she was very surprised. Whereas, the guy next to me said "I can't read and write and I don't want to". That was such a massive contrast.

We can see from the narrative above the contrasting educational backgrounds between Dafydd who had received a good education and the other prisoner who came from a travelling community, and how they were treated very differently. When asked how entering prison with a university education impacted on him, he said:

Dafydd: ... Oh I think I was looked upon favourably. I think I was looked after you could say [...]. I was moved straight to working in the library. I was also head librarian pretty quick. I had three exams to complete my second year of study [...]. The universities classify it as an overseas examination [...]. The university used to give course work to my girlfriend. She would come down on a visit every Sunday and take the course work that I've done and give me the new course work.

There is an important point to raise here about when Dafydd was sent to prison he had already been studying for a degree at university, but unlike Charlie, he was allowed to continue his education. This highlights the confusing ambivalence across university policies when dealing with prisoners and education. Dafydd feels that they made an exception with him because they knew him well which is in complete contrast to how other universities had treated other participants. For example, as we saw in Charlie's case in the previous section, he was completely rejected by the university he was studying at when he was convicted which highlights a clear need for more transparency and support for those with convictions to all receive equal support:

Dafydd:... I think because they knew me well and not just that, I've been a course representative here (university) for four years. I've always been quite close with the staff and always thought if I get on with someone that's teaching me I learn a lot more [...].

Open prisons are conducive to study because of the more relaxed rules (Aresti, 2015) which was perhaps why Dafydd was able to get his learning materials brought to the prison. Also, such prisons can have a different impact on the sense of self and are more geared towards adopting a desistance model. This is because prisoners are able to work in the community, take home leaves and be given more responsibility. However, despite the university's help with Dafydd's education, and more privileged conditions that are synonymous of open prisons, some of the prison staff were being deliberately obstructive.

Dafydd: ... I think parts of the prison were accommodating but some of the higher ups in prison don't necessarily agree with the special treatment that some educational prisoners receive. The woman who worked (in the prison) who was the education woman Janice, she was straight away - couldn't do enough to help me facilitate my studies. The case in point, when I was having my first lot of course work and they sent through the material for study, they wouldn't let it through the first week. He (the prison officer in charge) was adamant, 'No it's not coming in', and that really spoilt my visit.

DH: Did he give a reason?

Dafydd: Because he hadn't had approval or authorisation. Then the following week, because the visits were always on Sunday, that's the only day, we could have visits. So, because of that there was different staff in for the visits and there's no communication with visiting staff you could say and the weekly staff.

Here we can see another section of those in authority - in this case - working in the criminal justice system being deliberately difficult in allowing prisoners to continue their education yet a low risk category prison is geared towards resettlement which allows for more activities including education as way of reintegrating. Fortunately, within the open prison estate, Dafydd had the added support of educational staff. In a large-scale study by the Prisoners Education Trust (2009), most prisoner learners felt that their educational needs were supported. Although Dafydd is one of several of this sample who entered prison with a university education, Dafydd was the only one who managed to continue his course while serving a prison sentence. With encouragement from the prison education staff, and the transformations that education enables, Dafydd was able to transform his sense of self through learning. Dafydd was asked if other prisoners used his educational background to help them:

Dafydd: The guy I mentioned when I was saying I was doing a degree and he said: “I can't read and write”, he would come into the library and I would read the newspaper to him. He asked me when there was nobody there. He'd come in when we were just about to close. I think he was probably ashamed that he couldn't read and write and he was too proud to ask for help. Whereas he realised that I wasn't going to run around laughing at him and he came out of his shell. I used to sit and read to him.

Here we can see the impact of how low educational abilities can impact on the sense of self but we can also see a sensitive side of prison life that is never mentioned and how some prisoners help one another. This is an interesting insight into a more humanising aspect of prison life when one considers the dehumanising process of the prison process (Goffman, 1961).

Before entering higher education, Sid was studying an access course in English and maths during part of a three-year sentence in an open prison:

Sid: I was in a settlement unit in Kent. They would let me come over to do my finish off my access course. So, I actually did the access course. I was going to the lectures on a Friday coming up to White City, Shepherd's Bush way, every Friday and sitting in f.....g classroom with students finishing off my access course. So, I think, for me the environment in prison was helpful in a sense that there weren't the barriers that people are getting now, that I am hearing about. Stuff could get sent in to the education department [...] my wife was sending in the books, psychology books and stuff.

Sid found his experience of the open prison very rewarding as he was freely able to follow a course of higher education but as explained earlier, even within the open surroundings, he still felt a crisis of the self which amounted to a state of liminality.

Sid: So, for me I guess I had a clear goal. I knew that when I was in prison, I knew that I was going to do this access course and then going to university. I knew that in my head. I could have f....d that up by going round being tough either so I needed to be careful. So, there was, I wouldn't say tension, but there was this identity of...yeah you've still got to be tough because you're in prison and masculine. But actually, your being a student, and usually the two don't go together, but actually for me they do. It's never been an issue and actually it's quite a novelty as you probably know. I guess what I am trying to say that, when I was a kid, f..k that, the studying, they're all the geeks! I want to get out and get in to trouble and get that thrill but for me they are very compatible - those two identities.

Sid's narrative explains an interesting perspective where two identities collide (Healy, 2010, 2014). Sid claims that it does not cause tension but we can see within the narrative how he is trying to make sense of what seems to be an identity crisis. Despite Sid being in an open prison which allowed him a certain amount of freedom to attend college, he was still experiencing an inner conflict of the self which he encapsulates by saying: "those two identities". Bourdieu's 'habitus clive' offers a theoretical lens through which to analyse the tensions within Sid's insider/outsider status. As mentioned in the introduction, habitus clive is concerned with a mismatch between an individual's habitus and their environment which can lead to a place of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014). This is evident from the very beginning of a desistance journey whereby individuals feel that their past identities are no longer of relevance to who they are now, nor have they yet established a new identity. And as we saw earlier, this can be applied to the prison environment which was a discussion around closed prisons whereas liminality can become a much more profound crisis within open prisons when prisoners no longer belong to the carceral world (Shammas, 2015) but neither do they belong to society. They exist within a liminal world of imprisonment and freedom where part of their time is spent working or studying within the local community and the rest of their time is spent within the confines of a prison environment.

This state of liminality continues across several discourses within this study, for example, some of the participants who had already gained a university degree before going to prison were transformed into liminal spaces because they were treated differently by prison staff to other prisoners. They were given privileged status as the educated professional and though this gave them positive identities (Pike, 2014), it also created a divided self - a *habitus clive* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Bourdieu links *habitus clive* to the mismatch of habituses in relation to social mobility which can be translated to the prison environment and has been created by the prisons themselves. In 1995 the IEP scheme was introduced which is regarded as an essential tool of prison management that allows prisoners to earn extra privileges by promoting conforming behaviour through rational choice, enabling people to earn benefits in exchange for responsible behaviour (see Liebling, 2000). From the prisoner's perspective it is more to do with control whereby the more you have, the more they can take off you, for example (see Crewe, 2005, 2006). But as Crewe argues, some prisoners choose not to compete for privileges which enables them to maintain a level of autonomy (Sykes, 1958) while also creating their own ontological security (Crewe, 2011). While prisoners may struggle with an identity split, their alleviated status enabled them to forge new identities as a result of positive experiences within prison which ultimately led to elements of desistance (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016). This suggests that rather than prison being a deterrent it should be a place where individuals have time for personal reflection and opportunities for self-expression.

This section explored the notion of the open prison in relation to the construction of the self, but also found that prisoners housed in open conditions also experience a set of crises that parallel the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) experienced in secure prisons but are unique to open conditions. Many of the same punitive approaches synonymous with secure prisons exist in open prisons, but there are many more opportunities and privileges which enables an easier transition towards resettlement. However, prisoners within open conditions experience isolation as in Dafydd's case where he became ostracised by other prisoners because he was given a job in the library – a job usually given to sex offenders. Therefore, even within the more privileged confines of an open prison, a prisoner can experience 'stigma' and experience the 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1963). Sid experienced a clash of two identities including his prisoner self and his

student self and times, his former and present identity would and do clash which is a classic case of the habitus clive (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

4.5 ‘Prisoner learner’ identities

It is essential not to make education purely desistance focussed with too much emphasis on education enabling crime abstinence and the transformation of self through developing non-criminal identities (see Darke & Aresti, 2016). The liminal phase can be exited through prison education and enable upward social mobility within the prison environment where individuals develop new ‘prisoner learner’ identities. Furthermore, this involves belonging to a new culture of learning with an alleviated status within the prison education department. Prison also enabled transformations for those who already held degrees before going to prison by allowing them to become mentors (see PLA, 2015) for other prisoner learners. In other words, for those who already held degrees, their transformations developed in prison which the university environment was unable to do as they gained a privileged prisoner ‘status’ because of their past educational achievements.

This also impacted on how they began to view themselves and how they were viewed by others as educators and mentors (PLA, 2015) for other prisoners which corresponds with McNeill’s (2016) tertiary desistance theory about the importance of how desisters are viewed by others. It also provides a basis for an argument that perhaps prisoners who already hold university degrees and who are open to the idea of desistance, make the transition towards desistance faster than the others. The group of university graduates and the group of new prisoner learners both shared the same pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958), but the group who already held degrees experienced a more privileged status within the prison education department and amongst their prisoner peers which led to greater self-confidence, self-esteem and sense of self.

Paul was a 34-year-old housing manager and was one of the few who entered prison already with a degree. Identity confusion was at the core of Paul’s offending which can be analysed through the lens of symbolic interactionism because it is essential to him how others view him. And it was in prison where he was able to develop a new identity because his previous education was valued by

the prison education department. Although he did not continue with education after prison, education and those he interacted with while he was in prison helped him to develop a new sense of self.

Paul was one of the individuals who was experiencing an identity crisis in the outside world, but his previous education was critical in his transformation of self in prison. He forged an identity that would hold him in high regard in the same way he had wanted to be seen as a respectable doctor on the outside. His need to be respected was at the crux of his offending, but more importantly, his sense of self. Paul experienced a positive transformation of self through prison education which included him being a prisoner learner and mentor for other prisoners:

Paul: I was working literally nine to five. I was actually marking the lad's papers. I was mentoring the lads. I was working on the (stutters) pre-release scheme, helping them prepare CVs, covering letters etc. I was actively involved within helping other prisoners.

Paul's narrative offers an insight into how he transformed his sense of self through his role in the prison education department which gave him a purpose (Pike, 2014). As discussed in the previous section, he initially developed self-confidence and a new sense of self purely from being in prison.

For these participants, the prison education department offered possibilities for change which supports the argument that it would be of benefit if prisons developed a desistance approach towards assisting prisoners develop a positive transformation of self (McNeill, 2016; Schinkel, 2015; McNeill & Schinkel, 2016). These prisoners begin to see themselves as students, educators, mentors first and prisoners second. This draws on (Freire, 1977; Jarvis, 2009) who argue that adult education creates autonomy and freedom which as this thesis demonstrates is even possible from within prison.

Ju Ju was a 67-year-old retired academic who served seven and a half years imprisonment for statutory rape. He was British born but has resided in New Zealand most of his life and was the oldest individual of the sample and has enjoyed a lifetime career in research. Education has been an important part of his life before, during and after prison which has enabled him to immediately

overcome the barriers that others have encountered during their entry into university:

Ju Ju: After two weeks I was caught up in several indigenous guys I had worked with in the health services, doing time. By the time I went, I served the maximum obviously; they gave me a job in education in the library. I set up various things when I was inside. I set up the prisoner's advisory support service. I had a counselling service inside to support officers in strife. I actually represented two officers when I left, which was a very strange thing to do. They came to me for support. Set up a prisoner reform group.

Because Ju Ju was serving his sentence in New Zealand, it is difficult to know whether things would have been different for him in the UK, but judging by Paul's narrative, it would have been the same in a UK prison. In terms of identity transformation, the participants newly found academic identities replaced their prisoner identities which resonates with Maruna's (2001) discussion around how individuals seek to cast off their old identities and replace them with new ones. It also resonates with the symbolic interactionist perspective of the importance to individuals about how they view themselves and how they are viewed by others (Cooley, 1902, Mead, 1934, Scott, 2015) and as discussed earlier, this relates to McNeill's tertiary desistance concept which draws from the same perspective. Developing a new sense of self and change in the way individuals view themselves and how others view them enabled the participants to overcome their liminal stage which became a difficult place of limbo that is significantly present throughout different stages of participant's transformations.

4.6 The conflicted self

This section discusses the inner conflicts that involve shame, guilt and sexuality which as other studies have found, are very powerful emotions experienced by prisoners (Sykes, 1958) and desisters (Maruna, 2001). Charlie and Peter both came from privileged backgrounds and both experienced shame and guilt in relation to their offences and imprisonment and therefore this section explores whether their backgrounds were a significant contributory factor to these feelings. Shame is the second stage of Erikson's (1959) 'life span' model as existing in early childhood, while Buténaité et al (2016) associate shame as an existential

crisis. And as mentioned in chapter 2, Farrall & Calverley (2006) suggest shame is most common towards the end of the emotional trajectory of desistance but as neither Charlie nor Peter were desisters in the sense that they were ‘one-off’ offenders (Maruna, 2008) this does not apply to them. Paul and Carla both experienced conflicts in prison in relation to their sexualities and this section explores how they attempt to negotiate these challenging and difficult internal conflicts. It also explores how their experiences of being gay within the prison environment were in complete contrast due to their gender differences.

Charlie had gained a university education before going to prison, but his background was very different to the other participants in that he had also worked in probation and social services with offenders. The importance of this is that although higher education later played a major role in Charlie’s identity transitions, it was his experience of being a prisoner which made the largest contribution to his transformation. To get an idea of whether prison transformed his view of offenders, Charlie was asked about his view of offenders when he was working with the probation services:

Charlie: [...] I am embarrassed to say it, but I will be honest about it. I would interview people and in cells, and we would provide like a bail information scheme. It just shows how naive and judgmental I was and I’m not saying that I am not naive and judgemental still, but if somebody was telling me about their drug use, I used to think, “oh this person is bull shitting now, I bet it’s a lot more than that!”

Charlie was admittedly very judgemental of the offenders he used to work with but has since experienced some of the same hardships that many of his former client’s experienced. Charlie’s narrative identifies his transitional period of self during his time in prison which includes a new empathy towards offenders:

Charlie: Basically, I had already pigeon holed, judged somebody and probably written them off and gone in with loads of prejudices before interviewing them. So, one thing that I would do differently now, I would, and I do think how would I feel because I have sat on that side of a desk where a professional has probably gone in with lots of prejudices towards me and thought, I’m lying and talking out of my back side. How would I feel, and I would be angry and hurt and judged and it’s not nice. So I would like to feel that if I was in probation now, that I would be far more believing and understanding, empathetic and trusting.

This privileged knowledge from the ‘insider/outsider’ perspective enabled Charlie to develop a new sense of self from two different perspectives and two very different periods of his life. He was able to do this from his experiences as a former probation employee and a former prisoner. Charlie was asked if his sense of self was more enlightened as a result of his prison experience and if through this experience, he approached his postgraduate studies differently to when he first went to university to study criminology:

Charlie: It made me read [...] and interpret the text books very differently to how I would have done had I not been to prison [...] yes to answer your question directly, yes it did influence my studies. I found it good and bad [...]. I found it good because [...] I could read stuff and think, “yes, I recognise that” or, “I understand what this person is writing about”. But then it influenced it in a negative way because I found it hard to separate and see it in a neutral way. I ended up personalising a lot of the literature, so it was good and bad in the sense that I couldn’t look at it through the eyes that I looked through it as an 18-year-old, because my experience has clouded the way I interpreted the information.

It is interesting how as well as finding education after leaving prison to be a positive experience, Charlie also feels that his experiences have tainted how he interprets criminology. In his quote he is implicitly referring to the insider/outsider perspective which I have discussed in relation to my own position. Charlie’s education has been positive in the sense that he now has a much deeper insight into what it is like to be in prison and what it is like for those struggling to reintegrate after prison but as he continues to re-evaluate his place in society, he is experiencing a divided self or a *habitus clive* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

Charlie: I was a former prisoner who was studying whereas I want to be a ‘person’, a ‘student’, an ‘individual’ who has been to prison.

What Charlie is saying, is that he wants to be defined as a student first and foremost who just happens to have been to prison, and that being a prisoner is not something that should define his identity yet as he said in his earlier quote his experiences of prison has informed his education and therefore this is a positive step towards his new understanding of what ex-prisoners experience.

Like Charlie, Peter came from a privileged background and also felt shame (Maruna, 2001) for his offending and imprisonment. Yet Peter somehow feels his

short time in prison over 30 years ago limits his worthiness to be a participant in this study. However, his contribution to this study is still very important because of his insider/outsider knowledge which also enabled me to see the essential contribution convict criminologists can make.

Peter, a senior academic is now 58 years old and served three months imprisonment in the 1980s for incitement to commit arson and although he was sent to prison this was more about teenage angst rather than a criminal pathway. He came from a privileged background and had a very good early education and therefore, as I said earlier, felt somewhat unrepresentative for this study. He has continued with a successful academic career contributing to criminological research including the experiences of the insider/outsider status in prison research. Although he has found this to be quite daunting as a researcher, he did not have any difficulties reintegrating once he was released from prison and has not continued to be affected by stigmatisation. When Peter was asked if he had and difficulties reintegrating after prison, he said:

Peter: Not really. The most difficult thing would be the sense of the shame my parents felt. The sense of I've fallen the wrong way out and down but then being in a punk squat prepared them a little bit for the fact I wasn't going to become an accountant [...].

As with Charlie, Peter is concerned with the shame (Maruna, 2001) his parents felt about his actions, but his parents seem to have realised that Peter was not going to follow a straight path. Although he had a rebellious streak, as discussed earlier in relation to Debbie, Paul and Charlie's predicament, Peter is not the typical 'persistent' offender. As previous studies have demonstrated, the persister narratives are highly disorganised with no believable story of the self (Maruna, 2001). The narratives from the participants in this study are organised with clear aspirations and goals throughout the life course. Peter was asked if education was part of his desistance process:

Peter: Probably not. I'd been to university before I went to prison. It was uninterrupted, but I had stopped, quit after two years because I was more involved in this book shop that I'd helped to set up and setting up this community printing press.

Peter's transformation cannot be attributed to education because as he says, he had been to university before going to prison. However, this differs from Charlie

who had also been to university before yet found re-entry into university - a kind of rebirth of his self (Scott, 2015). Nevertheless, Peter has returned to education where he gained a PhD and as mentioned earlier, has made significant contributions to prison research.

Two of the participants who had not experienced prison before, were faced with an identity crisis about their sexuality. For example, we will see how Paul who admitted he was gay, felt the need to hide his sexuality in fear of his safety whereas Carla discovered profound sexual liberation during her time in prison. The different attitudes in male and female prisons towards sexualities has been documented which may have implications about the differences between male and female prisons. Either way, the following narratives give an interesting insight into how they negotiated their identities.

As discussed earlier, developing a new identity was crucial to Paul's sense of self and was at the root of his offending and why he was imprisoned, but prison enabled him to develop a positive and respectable sense of self that enabled him to transform his identity once he was released from prison. Paul gives a broader explanation about the impact prison had on his sense of self:

Paul: [...] I feel the most positive experience in my life was serving my prison sentence. [...] it gave me more life skills that I've ever had before. It taught me a lot. I went in there so naive, I wasn't street wise or anything but I think I am now [...].

Despite prison having a positive impact on Paul's life, he felt unable to be open about his sexuality in fear of being targeted by bullies. Paul felt it was safer to hide the fact he was gay. He said he just decided to hide his sexuality in fear of bullying, but this may have been because of what one of the prison officers had said to him when he first entered prison:

Paul: When I got in the prison I remember the officer interviewing me. She actually wanted to put me on the VPs (Vulnerable Prisoner) Unit. I asked 'why'?.

The prison officer told Paul this was because he was gay which Paul was surprised at because he felt would not be an issue with other prisoners. When he asked if it would make a difference, the officer told Paul it might if some of the other prisoners were to find out. Despite the officer's concern, Paul was adamant

that he wanted to be housed on the main population. Paul's sexuality was being treated as a problem, and even though the officer was showing concern for his safety, his identity as a gay man was compromised. Once Paul had made his position clear that he would not go on the VP (Vulnerable Prisoner) wing, the officer turned her attention towards his academic abilities.

Before studying medicine, Paul had previously gained a bachelor's degree. He recounts the prison officer telling him they do not get many prisoners with his educational background and expressed that she wanted to put his talents to good use. As a result, this prison officer was a positive influence towards helping Paul develop more self-esteem and confidence which demonstrates in relation to prisons and desistance how prison staff can influence change (McNeill, 2016). His narrative is consistent with Charlie's narrative (in the previous section) whereby both Charlie and Paul identify how they experienced a crisis of the self and were given support from prisoners and prison officers which led to an increased self-esteem. Charlie had self-harmed because of mental health issues and Paul was in fear of his security because of his sexuality. And as a result were offered support by both prisoners and prison staff which suggest a comradeship rarely mentioned in the prison literature, especially with regards support from prison officers. Instead the literature tends to focus on strained relationships between staff and prisoners, which again, advances the argument of this thesis that positive transformations do sometimes happen in prison. This is an important point whereby some staff members were exceeding their duties to support prisoners who were experiencing crises. The overarching argument here is the importance of this being nurtured and embedded within the prison system.

There were two distinctive turning points in Paul's identity transformation which included his sexuality and his education which transformed his sense of self. He explains how university enabled him to be 'himself' for the first time in his life and where he was able to express his sexuality. But also how in prison he felt the need to hide his sexuality yet how prison taught him life skills he had never learned elsewhere. In order to make sense of this, it is important to refer back to Paul's offence of deception whereby he claimed to be a doctor. Being revered as an inspiration to others was paramount to his identity and sense of self and therefore as he developed his mentor and educator identity within the prison education department, he developed a new enriched sense of self.

When comparing prison to university in relation to identity, Paul was discussing how he was able to be open about his sexuality at university but did not develop the life skills and confidence that he had been able to in prison. He was able to develop his sexuality though at university through belonging to a reference group (Shibutani, 1962) and that he was also actively involved in the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Association (LGBTGA).

DH: Did that help you come to terms with being gay?

Paul: Definitely, yes. I know it's quite a backwards thing to say, but prison helped me. [...] It certainly taught me a lot of things about myself. Made me a stronger person I suppose. One thing that is harder than 'coming out' is not embracing what prison did for you... if that makes sense. Because, of my conviction, I feel ashamed a lot at times. I feel it's something I have to hide. That is a part of my identity that actually created me at a young age [voice breaks].

Once again, we can see how prison has enabled personal transition more than university which contradicts Scott's (2015) analysis of reinventive institution. Paul seems to be suggesting that prison can have a positive influence on a person and that it is important to be honest about it which corresponds with the argument of this chapter. But his narrative also suggests that others are perhaps not honest about this aspect of prison life and that is important to do so. Paul is saying that it is difficult not to embrace the positive aspects of prison life because for Paul, he feels prison helped develop him into a stronger individual.

Carla, 22, was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for perverting the course of justice (a false rape allegation). She had also experienced substance and alcohol abuse issues and has struggled with her own identity as a lesbian woman. She found prison to be liberating as she was able for the first time in her life to explore and express her sexuality with other women. She now works with a major charity that helps other individuals who are experiencing the same issues.

Both Paul and Carla had overcome their crises by developing positive identities and found prison to be a personally rewarding experience but it could be argued that Carla was at an advantage because of her gender. Within the hyper-masculine male prison environment (Carrabine, 1998), Paul felt he would be safer to keep his sexual orientation hidden, whereas Carla was liberated by being openly gay within the prison environment.

DH: Was being gay something that [...] without getting too personal, something you explored further in prison?

Carla: Oh definitely, yes, quite a lot. You know what prison is like [...]

As Carla infers here, prison is known for its acceptance of gay sex and therefore was able to be the person she was. This was in contrast to Paul's feelings that he may be at risk. But this may have been instilled in him after the conversation he had with the prison officer. Carla was asked if being openly gay gave her some kind of comfort:

DH: So, prison helped you? ... at least the women in the prison helped you?

Carla: ... I suppose it did. It made me see people more fluent with their sexuality ... made me feel like that made me think it's ok. They were openly gay women.

Carla begins to get emotional here remembering how she felt as a child when she was unable to communicate her inner feelings caused by sexual abuse, so here we see a different side to prison life that is not usually discussed in research studies of prisoners. The contrast between Paul's and Carla's experiences can be explained through their gender differences. For example, Stevens (2015) found in her study that 'female prisoners were more overly affectionate and more willing to be seen to be emotionally and socially reliant upon other women prisoners to 'cope with' their imprisonment' (p. 7). In complete contrast, a report by the Howard League for Penal Reform (2014) on coercive sex in male prisons, found that gay and transgender prisoners are more likely than heterosexual prisoners to face sexual victimisation.

Therefore, to summarise, the participant's experiences of inner conflicts within prison shaped their biographical self-constructions but their experiences before entering prison also helped shaped their biographies. The impact of prison impacted on Charlie and Peter's sense of self by making them feel shame for letting their parents down. Shame can be a powerful emotion in the reconstruction of the self which Maruna (2001) argues can be redeemed through generativity. This is because shame is at the core of the redemptive process whereby one strives to help others as a way of giving back (see chapter 6). Such self-constructions can be reconstructed by exploring the biographical narratives of the participants who

went through an incarceration and have to cope with the stressful experience of stepping in and out of the total institution.

Both Charlie and Peter had come from privileged backgrounds and they talk candidly about shame and how they brought shame to their parents (Maruna, 2001). This inner conflict begins to make the transformation of self very difficult as it creates a period of liminality that is difficult to exit. Peter's experience of prison was over 30 years ago and was a very short sentence which made Peter feel somehow unworthy of being part of this study, yet he offers both insider and outsider knowledge as an ex-prisoner and successful academic.

Charlie continues to work on his inner conflict but while he is in conflict with himself he is unable to make a complete transformation of self. Yet there is no need for ex-prisoners to make a complete transformation of self, but rather to manage their lives beyond prison. As this study argues, individual's biographical dispositions are at the root of their cultural habitus which continues to challenge their sense of self which is discussed further within this study. But one may ask, what does a "transformation" actually look like or feel like? This can be answered through previous examples of successful desisters who have transformed their lives through employment, education and other means and made good (Maruna, 2001). Paul and Carla experiences of inner conflict link directly to their sexuality and what emerges here is how their individual experiences were in complete contrast because of their gender differences. Their sexualities were paramount to who they were, but Paul was able to transform his sense of self through education despite feeling the need to hide his sexuality. Carla on the other hand was able to be expressive and experimentative with her sexuality.

4.7 Conclusion

Scott's (2015) notion of reinventive institution provides an alternative perspective of two paralleled concepts that offer useful conceptual frameworks for this study. Goffman's (1961) total institutions and Syke's (1958) pains of imprisonment discuss the stripping of identities and mortification of self and deprivations of the self whereby prisoners undergo a period of liminality and loss. But the data in this

study is somewhat contradictory to previous studies that portray imprisonment as a complete dehumanising process and attack on the prisoner's self. It also highlights an important and disturbing emerging situation amongst our universities which appear to be developing more punitive measures towards people with convictions. The participant's prison experiences provide us with an essential insight into crises of the self that trigger self-transformations facilitated by space and time within the prison environment that was not possible on the outside, and also how the prison environment provided experiences that were both difficult and beneficial (McNeill & Schinkel. 2014). For example, the participants experienced isolation and confinement which forces the self to re-evaluate their lives and what meaning their lives have.

A recurring theme throughout the entire study is that of liminality – meaning a threshold; ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the middle stage of rituals, when participants no longer hold their pre-ritual status but have not yet begun the transition to the status they will hold when the ritual is complete (see Gennup, 1960). Liminality becomes a dominant theme because it is a necessary transition to the next rite of passage but one that is delayed for those with criminal convictions.

Education enables some transformation through this liminal stage by providing the participants with new identities which gave them a sense of who they were and what their purpose in life was. This chapter advances the transformative process by examining the early onset of a personal crises caused by fear of prison and their futures and the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958). It also highlights several aspects that are under research. For example, 'paradoxes of total institutions', argues that prisoners experience a sense of crises that led to their initial transformations which is analysed through the lens of cognitive transformation theory (Giordano et al., 2002). This chapter does diverge from desistance however by analysing initial desistance transformations within the prison setting through the conceptual framework of the cognitive transformation theory (Giordano et al., 2002). Such transformations have been mentioned in previous studies, but none have exclusively studied desistance within the prison environment.

The notion of a desistance approach in prison is offered by McNeill & Schinkel (2016) which is a perspective worthy of further exploration. But this is an approach that has always been synonymous with open prisons and therefore, this chapter also discusses the approach of open prisons in this context because of their approach towards resettlement, trust and freedom. Prison and desistance is nothing new when considering the open prison regime but there is a stark contrast between the more secure prisons and open prisons. However, open prisons still possess a controlling institutional habitus with a constant overshadowing threat of losing one's freedom within open conditions and being returned to secure conditions. And therefore, prisoners find themselves within the liminal stages again where they no longer belong to the mainstream prison environment nor do they belong to society.

Their transformations included introspective periods and negotiation of identities whereby they began to consider a blue print of a future self (Giordano et al., 2002). As noted by McNeill & Schinkel (2016), the transformative powers amongst the participants varied across different prisons. In other words, some prisons are better suited to support prisoner transformations than others which we saw in Dafydd's example of the open prison. The participant's period of imprisonment was a crucial aspect to this study as it allows us to fully understand how one can overcome the most extreme situations. This is where one has lost their liberty yet possess a freedom of will to challenge their pains of imprisonment (Syke's, 1958) through education - a period which involves contemplating their present self and their future self. This challenges Goffman's (1961) total institution concept (see chapter 2) because despite the stripping of identities, the participants were able to develop new identities through education, employment, and social bonds (Pike, 2014; McNeill, 2011). And supports Scott's earlier argument that those incarcerated are not powerless as Goffman (1961) suggests, but are in fact resistant, and as Pike (2014) argues 'resilient'.

Chapter 5: Narratives of liminality

5.1 Introduction

The psychosocial process can be further analysed from the participant's narratives where the insider/outsider position becomes central to the interviews for both researcher and participants (Kotabra & Fontana; Farrall, 2005). A reciprocal narrative between researcher and participant invokes an existential experience that involves intense self reflection so while the participants discussed their identity crises in this study, I began to self reflect much more about my own sense of self. Bourdieu (2004) describes this as a self socioanalysis of an incompatible existence within two social worlds that presents a 'habitus clive' which can also be translated to the stagnated periods of liminality experienced by ex-prisoners (Healy, 2010, 2014).

There is however, a contrasting argument to the insider/outsider tensions and the divided self (Bourdieu, 2004) through the lens of the convict criminology perspective which is also an alternative viewpoint to previous desistance studies (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna, 2001). Desistance scholars argue that desisters begin to disassociate themselves from their former identities (Maruna, 2001) but for the convict criminologist, merging past identities with present identities is crucial for their upward social mobility as former prisoners turned academics (Jones, et al., 2009). This also creates an ongoing transformation of self because the past is always present and although mainly positive there is still a risk of being trapped within these criminal identities and defined by one's criminal past.

In this study, the participants continually negotiate their insider/outsider identities, for example, their past and present experiences as university students and employees to their imagined future selves (Giordano et al., 2002) which they contemplate through a unique, reciprocal narrative with my own shared lived experiences (Kotabra & Fontana, 1984; Farrall, 2005). Education enables the participants to overcome boundaries and exit their liminal phases (Healy, 2010, 2014) but also as they continue their academic journeys, equally importantly,

setbacks strengthened their resilience (McAdams, 2006) which enabled them to overcome further barriers and continue to transform their lives and identities. Developing such resilience is largely as a result of the 'role of belief and trust' enabled psychological transitions which became catalysts for change (Giordano et al. 2002). Environmental factors are also contributory towards the psychosocial process because of how other individual's behaviours impact on successful desistance (McNeill, 2016) (see chapter 6). And it is largely because of the influence of other individuals that makes the transformation of self an unending and difficult process which theoretically can be analysed through existential sociology (Kotabra & Fontana; Farrall, 2005); habitus clive/the divided self (Bourdieu, 2004); liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014) and convict criminology (Jones et al. 2009).

5.2 Negotiating the ex-offender identity

Negotiating identities is at the core of this thesis because it is a lifetime process with no exact beginning and no end and includes many complex and difficult ongoing transitions. Sid claimed that his multiple identities were at times ambivalent and as discussed in relation to this, experienced a divided self (Bourdieu, 2004). But for the convict criminologist, embracing both former and current identities become an essential disposition for their upward social mobility and academic careers (Jones, et al., 2009; Bourdieu, 2004). Moreover, it becomes an essential process to overcome liminal stages and to settle identity conflict. Despite this, the convict criminologist may feel that their habitus prevents them from complete upward social mobility (Bourdieu, 2004). In this section the participants attempt to gauge an imagined future self by drawing on my personal experiences as a convict criminologist and as someone who has successfully transformed their life through higher education.

In McAdam's (1994, p.6) theory that consists of three levels of personality, he explains: 'the evolving narrative individuals construct to integrate their pasts, present and perceived futures into personal identity sustains and guides behaviour'. This is a significant point where individuals explore the narrative identity, in other words, construct new identities through their narratives.

This movement of narrative can be clearly seen from the different dialogues in this section and how the participants interacted with my own shared lived experiences. As each narrative demonstrates, they were trying to make sense of their own identities by asking me what position I adopt in terms of using my past identity as an ex-prisoner alongside my new identity as an academic. Most of the participants who did this were negotiating two habituses (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) which belong to their past with their present and how this impacted on their perceived futures. And in a role reversal as the researcher, I also aspired to those who had already achieved their PhDs and gained permanent academic positions which symbolically, gave me a future sense of self and a goal towards a new identity. This created a new dynamic which made the interview process not just a negotiation of identities for the participants but myself included as I was yet to accomplish the same status as some of my participants. From this I began to develop my central argument about the desistance process being separate to the transformation of self because I now recognised that I was still on the same journey as those I was studying. The narrative below demonstrates how myself and the participants engage in this two-way dialogue when negotiating our identities in relation to our biographies. It also demonstrates how the study starts to progress towards being autoethnographical.

Stacey, 26, was one of the youngest of the sample. She also had the longest criminal record than the others. In terms of desistance, Stacey's journey was unusual by the fact that she had desisted by her early twenties when criminal activities tend to be at their peak. Here Stacey was asked if her ex-offender status has become less important than it used to be:

Stacey: [...] yes, I'm an ex-offender. I do go around on different talks and stuff as an ex-offender, but I always get across where I am at now. I don't want to be... you sort of prescribe the label of an ex-offender. What the hell is an ex-offender anyway? When do you become an ex-offender? You could go out and get a speeding ticket. Are you an offender? What do you call yourself? What do you identify yourself as? There always debates on Twitter for God's sake - ex-offenders, ex-con, and I don't like being called an ex-con!

DH: Why is that?

Stacey: ... Because I don't know... it... it reminds me of proper tough guy back in the day; no, I'm not an ex-con!

DH: Because it makes you feel old?

Stacey: ... Yes, an older more masculine...it's like if I walked up and said I'm an ex-offender or an ex-con, I think 'cons' remind me of really sly and wrong...But I do call myself an ex-offender. Do you?

Stacey notes that she has prescribed to the ex-offender label and has delivered public talks about her past yet as she explains, she also emphasises where she is today so as not to be defined by her past. This is an important discourse where two identities are merged but then positioned within their context. One identity is invoked within a redemptive script (Maruna, 2001) whereas the other is presented through what Goffman (1959) refers to as 'region analysis' in which people choose what they offer in their front-region in an effort to present their chosen identity. I explained that I still refer to myself as an 'ex-con' (ex-convict) despite it being an old fashioned term. Stacey does not like this term because it links to the former hyper-masculine prison environment (Carrabine, 1998) of bygone years - a period long gone before Stacey was born. Stacey is using narrative to reconstruct her identity that allows her to refer to her former self without feeling stigmatised. She is clearly negotiating specific terminology which is important in her presentation of self (Goffman, 1959). As a frame of reference in deciding the most appropriate label she feels best represents herself, she asks me if I use my ex-offender status. It is clear to me that my old fashioned ex-con identity is an important aspect of my own habitus because it reminds me of how much I have achieved since those far off days in which many of us suffered as prisoners during an era of degradation and brutality.

Stacey is conscious about how she presents herself which she appears to have become successful in doing and could be attributed to the fact that she is 26 and able to adapt more easily within social circles such as the university culture. Stacey has worked with young offenders who immediately judged her sardonically as 'a white middle-class female student', with a 'what would she know' attitude. This was a curious and misjudged labelling reversal by offenders towards someone they perceived as naive.

Tariq, who is 28-year-old, was already a student when he went to prison continued his studies after release and has found the whole university experience a positive one including lecturing staff, students and coursework which has enabled him to negotiate his ex-offender identity with more ease than some of the other participants. Tariq was the only member of an ethnic minority in the sample

which provided a useful albeit limited insight into some of the cultural differences for desisters (Calverley, 2013). Tariq was also one of the few who already had a university degree before he went to prison, but he explains that before going to prison, he was less motivated than he is now. Therefore, he has aspirations to one day complete a PhD and currently continues with education and has been involved in local community police initiatives.

Tariq: My experience of lecturers has been really accepting. It's not been an issue. Again, you have to consider that offence and the nature of the incident. They know the offence - they know the nature of the incident - they know that I'm not a habitual criminal and I never have been. They know exactly what happened. Had I been done for a sex offence for example it might be a different story so there's that to consider. The lecturers have definitely been accepting. I just choose to tell when I tell people. I don't tell a lot of people at all. Do you tell a lot of people?

Tariq's neutralises his former offender identity by comparing it to that of sex offenders in relation to being accepted to study at university (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Hirschi, 1969). We know that this can be an issue through Tom's example (more on this later) who settled for distance learning because of the nature of his offences. He also emphasises that he is not an 'habitual criminal' and that he never has been. This is true and so Tariq is trying to demonstrate that he is different to 'general offenders' (Liem & Richardson, 2014) and through identifying with my own predicament, he asked me if I openly disclose my past. I explained that I am very open about it and had written about it to which Tariq responded:

Tariq: So, if I was in your position I would as well. If I was doing my PhD, I would. For example, LinkedIn [social network for professionals] - it's not on my LinkedIn [profile] and I'm going to put it on my LinkedIn now. It's not been on my LinkedIn up until today. Over the next week or two I am going to make a brand-new LinkedIn and I'm not even going to update my old one because it's got my old colleagues on. I'm going to make a brand new one, so then my old colleagues don't know about this one. I am going to put on there that I am an ex-offender.

And therefore, from my response, Tariq begins to gain more confidence about openly using his ex-offender status which he says he will do through social media. This demonstrates a re-construction of narrative identity through reciprocal discussion about the insider/outsider dilemma (Maruna, 2001).

Tariq: The thing is, in my job, I am working as a substance misuse family support worker. So, I have got a job in that kind of sector so it hasn't been that much of a barrier for me. It's only because I think because of the work I have put in. I have got two degrees. I have two work experiences, so people can see I work my socks off. They can see it was an isolated incident.

Writers such as Maruna (2001) and Giordano et al. (2002) discuss how desisters use narratives to make sense of their present and future selves as Tariq does when he refers to his achievements and the direction his work and education is taking him in. This resonates with how life goals give desisters direction in which to act and how self-narratives provide the shape and coherence to our lives. This can be applied to Tariq's narrative as he explains his actions as 'isolated' which in the desistance literature, suggests that his transformation will be smoother than for someone who is a persistent offender (Maruna, 2001).

One of the areas of narrative criminology in relation to desistance that is completely overlooked is how and why ex-offenders over disclose their past offending – sometimes to complete strangers. Yet the process of over disclosing could be useful in analysing how individuals use narrative to make justifications having paid their debt to society. It could be associated to feelings of shame and low self-esteem but Sykes & Matza's (1957) neutralisation theory of how offenders play down their offences can be translated to narratives of ex-offenders who over disclose their pasts as a way of re-negotiating of identities (i.e. trying to make sense of the world and re-biographing) (Maruna, 2001). To put this into further context of neutralisation narratives, over disclosing could be a way of dissociating oneself from past offending followed by reconstructive narrative (Maruna, 2001).

For example, Chloe came out of prison 'completely broken' she says. While trying to mend her life her re-biographing (Maruna, 2001) included using narrative to try and make sense of who she was and where she belonged. At the time of writing, Chloe, 38, worked for a prison reform charity and has gained degrees in Health Studies and Social Science and social research. She felt as though she used to over disclose her past to others which also suggests a 'looking glass self' concept where she feels it was important of how others viewed her and which McNeill argues is an important transformation of desistance (McNeill, 2006).

Chloe: ... I just felt like, I'd tell everybody because, I felt like everybody knew, like it was stamped on me and I would literally tell people [upset] probably inappropriately, over disclosing.

Chloe's sentence: 'like it was stamped on me' is an interesting reference to how she felt she was labelled to the extent that others instinctively were aware of her past and corresponds with Becker's (1963) labelling theory but to what extent were her feelings real? She may have felt this way but in reality, no one could actually know about her past by merely looking at her. Similarly, Stacey hides the scars on her arms as they remind her of her past self-harming, but also because she does not want others knowing about her past or making assumptions about her. The difference here of course is that while Chloe feels that her past from within is somehow transparent and visible to others, Stacey's scars are outwardly visible.

Stacey is very self-conscious of her appearance and explains how important it is to her to give the right impression even if it means hiding anything reminiscent of her past self:

Stacey: [...] have scars on the tops of my legs and my arms. You can see they are not that bad, they're all old, small, but I have got a real thing about that. Even for work I never show my arms - ever. My close colleagues and my friends know, but they are like... "Why are you even bothered?" "It's weird, isn't it?"

Despite Stacey's complete transformation of self, she continues to negotiate the identity she wishes others to see and the identity that roots her to her past because some things cannot be changed such as the scars which have an everlasting affect both psychologically and physically.

Yet despite Chloe feeling self-conscious about what others may be thinking about her, she continued to over disclose her past convictions. When Chloe applied for a two year college place, again she felt the need to over disclose her past:

Chloe: ... Again, I probably over explained my situation, I don't anymore. I don't actually think it's anyone's business anymore; I don't do it in this job; I don't go to meetings and say, 'oh yes I'm ex-prisoner blah de blah'. It's not that I hide it from people. It's not like I'm ashamed. I just think that everybody's different. Like some people, they do that, and that's fine. I don't think that's a wrong thing. It's just something that I've learnt from

my own experiences of doing that... that actually now I do this job now because I really enjoy it.

Both Chloe and Judy have now completely transformed their lives and reject their past identities which they feel serve no purpose to their current transformations but despite Chloe and Judy's claim they still continue to feel emotional when discussing their life experiences. This adds to the overall argument of this thesis therefore that transformations do continue beyond the desistance process.

This section introduced the concept of over disclosing which is an important aspect of narrative criminology, but which is absent within the desistance literature. The contention around disclosure is that it can lead to discrimination from others and sometimes individuals over disclose when it is not necessary. This is mainly because they want to be honest but ironically, in the legal sense over disclosing can backfire when applying to universities (Prisoners Education Trust , 2017) and employment positions (more on this in the following section). Furthermore, the subject of disclosure becomes central to the participants narratives as they reflect on our shared experiences and my convict criminologist status as a way of re-biographing an imagined self (Giordano et al. 2001).

5.3 The convict criminologist perspective

We have seen how merging past and present identities is constructive for the convict criminologist in relation to their academic careers and how psychologically existing within two social worlds which combine past criminal identities and current law-abiding identities, can be advantageous for sharing invaluable insight and knowledge. An additional argument in relation to the transformation of the convict criminologists academic career is that the university admission process compels individuals with first hand experiences of the criminal justice system towards criminology and cognate disciplines because of their criminal histories. The majority of the participants in this study felt compelled towards studying criminology and sociology because of some kind of calling where they felt that their life experiences could benefit others but also help them make sense of their own lives. But apart from their conscious decisions to gravitate towards these disciplines it could be argued that the university admissions system also limits choices for people with convictions because of the

rules around disclosure for certain courses such as teaching, medicine whereby background checks have to be made for all applicants.

This is not suggesting any form of discrimination but rather an impossible situation where no matter what progress individuals with convictions make, their educational and employment pathways will always be predetermined to some degree. And thus, they become defined by their past lives in order for them to be socially mobile within academe but as we have seen this sometimes leads to a *habitus clive* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). In other words, the extent of a successful criminology career for someone with criminal convictions may largely depend on using one's past to inform teaching and research which further adds to the argument that the transformation is unending. Put simply, there can never be a complete transformation for these individuals who progress within academic circles because it is their misdemeanours that influence their success.

While some of the participant's previous narratives make a clear dissociation from former identities through their progression into higher education, convict criminologists choose not to dissociate themselves from their past which means they have to adhere to the constraints of the institutional *habitus* (see chapter 2). An empirical example of the institutional *habitus* has been demonstrated by how universities are handling admissions from applicants with criminal convictions (see Prisoners Education Trust, 2017). However, there is also some contradiction to the institutional *habitus* concept within the data of this study where some university departments (especially departments of social science and law) do offer individuals with criminal convictions opportunities to provide an essential contribution towards the advancement of criminological research and teaching. This is certainly the case for several individuals in this study who have been encouraged to share their past experiences for the benefit of students and Clarissa in section 5.6 explains her experiences of this at her university.

Therefore there is an argument that while there is an institutional *habitus* that creates obstacles for university applicants with criminal convictions, in contrast, there is also an increasing amount of ex-prisoner/offenders teaching in universities (Jones, et al., 2009). Here, Jones et al. explain the development of convict criminology and increase of convict criminology academics:

Slowly, the (Convict Criminology) group has become stronger as ex-convicts have received jobs at academic institutions and risen through the ranks to get tenure, gain administrative experience, attract external funding, and complete significant research projects. At the very least, the past decade has proved that ex-convicts can be good academic citizens and make significant contributions to the academic literature while maintaining their original focus on prison reform (Jones, et al., 2009, p. 160).

Therefore, while the data in this study supports the argument that university admissions procedures have been discriminative, it also demonstrates how the lived experiences of convict criminologists are embraced within some university departments. This is not to say that university admissions policies do not need to be revised and something that this thesis recommends in chapter 7, but rather that all universities need to be consistently fair in their treatment of people with convictions.

The insight that individuals develop from their experiences within the criminal justice system that can then be passed on to benefit the academic world is captured here by American convict criminologists, Ross et al. (2011)

Numerous first-hand accounts of prison life have been written but until recently, accredited research from former prisoners equipped with higher degrees has been rare. After 1997 this began to change following the formation of a group of criminologists with experience of incarceration or of working with criminals in prisons. These scholars have begun producing research that is informed by their experiences of crime and the criminal justice process (p. 2).

In other words, convict criminologists have varying perspectives to offer as academics with first-hand experience of the criminal justice system and as academic researchers. This offers an additional perspective to the secondary stage of the desistance process where desisters move towards developing a 'replacement self' (Giordano et al. 2002) and reject former identities (Maruna, 2001). It also contradicts Becker's (1963) labelling theory that individuals are treated as 'outsiders' which although is true for many people with convictions, is contrasted by the perspective of convict criminologists. In fact, the participants in this study were using their ex-offender labels to progress aspects of their academic careers - though it must be noted - not wishing their academic success to be defined by their ex-offender identities (Jefferson, 2002). For convict criminologists, embracing both former and current identities become an essential disposition for their academic careers, but moreover, it becomes an essential

process to overcome liminal stages and to settle inner conflict of their sense of self (Jones, et al., 2009).

The convict scholars are able to do what many previous researchers could not: merge their past with their present and provide a provocative approach to the academic study of their field. The convict perspective is also based on perceptions, experiences, and analytical ideas that originate with defendants and prisoners, which are then developed by critical scholars (Jones, et al., 2009, p. 153).

Additionally, the convict criminologist perspective presents a diverse perspective to desistance studies which typically analyse ex-prisoners/offenders rather than ex-prisoner/offender academics. There have been desistance studies conducted by convict criminologists of ex-prisoners/offenders (Aresti, 2010) and there have been many desistance studies by non-ex-convict academics, but as far as this study is aware, there have been no desistance studies to date using a convict criminologist sample. But being a convict criminologist myself, interviewing two other convict criminologists about their desistance journeys and self-transformations offered an alternative perspective to the desistance literature. These interviews were existential experiences where each of us were able to share narratives about our personal transformations including the obstacles and emotional barriers and the confusion related to the divided self (see chapter 2) (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

Convict criminology scholars, Darke & Aresti (2016) argue that: the ‘transformative power of education and in particular, higher education has been documented in a growing body of academic work’ (p.28). They argue that the influential role of education and higher education plays a significant role in desistance which includes a complex interaction of individual, social and environmental processes and factors which involves a shift in one’s sense of self, and the emergence of a pro-social identity. Their claim supports the earlier discussion that there is a shift in one’s sense of self which allows pro-social identities rather than developing ‘a replacement self’ (Giordano et al., 2002), and therefore multiple identities can exist.

Peter (also a convict criminologist) discusses below how sharing an ex-offender identity in education is essential:

Peter: Convict criminology is a way to build and share [...] experiences and the difficulties, you face. [...] Most people doing criminology have not been ‘nicked’. They haven’t been ‘banged up’ and they can write with a real insight and authority on it. But they shouldn’t be the only people doing it. If there are people who can do that and work in [incorporate] that experience that you [myself] had and Sid and [anon] had into all those other training that you do as criminologists [...] that’s why I think it’s important to work with those experiences.

Peter feels it is important to share past experiences and through it develop new identities as criminologists that can offer a unique perspective for the benefit of higher education that other criminologists cannot. However, Ju Ju argues that holding on to the ex-offender/prisoner label for over a considerably lengthy period of time, can eventually become a burden:

Ju Ju: There’s a time when the label gets too heavy and you’ve got to it put it down. There’s no need anymore. I’m quite happy to support groups and talk about time inside with people like yourself because it’s an important learning curve. But there’s also a time in everybody life when they think, after twenty bloody years thinking, it’s getting a bit old. There’s new ground to break, so that’s where I’m at.

Ju Ju identifies where the ex-offender label can become tiring after many years of using it to define oneself but sees the importance of revisiting his past identity to support academic studies such as this one. This resonates with Judy and Chloe’s earlier narratives where they also say that they no longer feel their pasts are of any significance, but as suggested, still felt that sharing their past experiences for the benefit of this study was important. Therefore, even those within the sample who decided to shun their past identities and felt their past lives had no significance on their present lives, still felt their experiences were an important contribution towards advancing academic knowledge through participating in this study. Their perspective is in line with the convict criminology scholars who as I have discussed throughout this section use their first-hand experiences to benefit their teaching and research. In much the same way, Chloe, Judy and Ju Ju are doing this by participating in this study.

Convict criminologists have a unique perspective in relation to their former lives because they choose to embrace the ex-offender identity which becomes an important aspect of their identity transformations.

Sid was asked how the convict criminology perspective is important to his identity:

Sid: How could it not inform everything I do? How could it not inform everything ... the stuff that I lecture about? The stuff I write about? Everything I write about? The very fact that we've got British convict criminology [...] that old identity has to be part of it! It's like my old identity and my new identity have merged together. I guess what I am saying now [...] my identity now is a combination of some of the positive of the past experience and what I have achieved now and what I do now.

Here Sid explains how he has 'merged' his old and new identities which is the term Jones et al (2009) use to explain the unique position of the convict criminologist (see p.148). Sid views his successful academic identity as having been forged through a combination of past and present identities, as discussed above, and that the criminology route was the most relevant given his past, and that his new status of being a criminology lecturer (i.e. possessing a privileged knowledge) gives him a sense of identity that embraces his past and present identities:

Sid: Listen, it's a lot of things. It's certainly a protection thing definitely. It's part of my identity now. [...] I'm not just any other lecturer right? 'doing criminology'. I am a lecturer doing criminology got f.....g experience that we are talking about. The prison stuff, the crime stuff this, that, and the other. So of course! If I was a lecturer in flower arranging for arguments sake, that identity would have no relevance, would it?

As Sid says, his identity is relevant to him teaching criminology and it is an important aspect of his teaching. As I have explained, in terms of identity, the convict criminologist's successful use of their former and current self gives us an insight into the power of education and how the shared lived experience can inform both research and teaching within criminology, but also, how it enables them to transform their sense of self and identities.

There is another dimension to the convict criminology perspective though that is central to this study which suggests that regardless of whether ex-prisoners/offenders reject or indeed merge old and new identities, their habitus will always prevent a complete transformation of self. This was discussed earlier in relation to stigma and the divided self (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) whereby although individuals make significant individual transformations, they will over

many times of their life span, encounter barriers that relate directly to their past lives. Sid who as we know is very open and honest about this past and has transformed his identity, still continues to experience this 'visceral habitus' (Winlow & Hall, 2009, p. 3). Winlow & Hall (2009) describe this as being 'primarily defensive and cautionary' which can backfire when used as justification for impulsive and aggressive behaviour to perceived threats. They describe such 'embodied motivations' as a 'visceral habitus' at the centre of the subject's biographical narrative' (ibid).

To put this into context, Sid sometimes experiences a divided self when his past and present identities collide, and which can be analysed in Sid's narrative below:

Sid: The masculinity... yeah there is tensions sometimes. I did think, f.....g hell "grow up you're an idiot"! when I'm in the car with my wife and kids and someone cuts me up and I'm off on one. And my wife's like, "calm down, calm down there's children in the car"! Well actually I'm 47 years old, I shouldn't be behaving like that - like a f.....g 20-year-old but it's hard. People think, it's not only, it's psychological but it's also an emotional thing. If someone does something [...] you just change automatically. Your whole f.....g body, just sort of ... you tense up you get aggressive. It's an automatic reaction and my therapist used to say what you need to do, when you're doing that in that situation, count to ten so you can think, so your emotions don't take over. It's a visceral thing your whole f.....g body you just [...].

Despite Sid's complete transformation of self, his new identity and successful career, he still has to sometimes deal with the challenges of his aggressive disposition. That is not to say that he is at risk of being violent, but Sid uses the term visceral which is instinctive or primitive and therefore something that is embedded within a person's self - a person's habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

Therefore, to summarise, this section identified the diversity of how individuals with criminal convictions negotiate their past and present identities. Some have been able to forge successful careers through embracing their criminal backgrounds while others prefer to disassociate themselves from their past lives because their experiences were painful but even those who have chosen to do this were proactive in contributing their experiences for the benefit of this study. As their narrative suggests within this study, drawing on painful experiences as an important part of the transformation process and this is something discussed further in the following chapter. The perspective of the convict criminologist is to

make significant transformations both personally and professionally through merging their past and present identities which enables them to overcome periods of liminality. The concept of liminality is a fluid one, but this idea draws on my own position and the extent of how higher education can transform the self without completely changing one's identity.

5.4 The impact of discrimination, stigma and spoiled identities

Despite developing pro-social identities through the transformative process of higher education, the participants still encountered barriers which included further stigmatisation. Goffman (1963) uses the term 'spoiled identity' to refer to the stigmatised individual as being outcast, but often the participants unwittingly created this problem themselves. For example, over disclosing can not only create stigmatisation from other individuals but also from universities which has resulted with participants having their applications rejected as a result of their criminal backgrounds despite their convictions being 'spent' (not required by law to be disclosed). This was because some of the applicants had not understood the what the terms 'spent' and 'unspent' mean. This can be further understood in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974, 2014) (see Unlock, 2018). This misunderstanding led to several of the participants being unfairly rejected by universities (Prisoners Education Trust, 2017). It also resonates with the earlier discussion of why ex-offenders feel the need to often over disclose their pasts as a way of redeeming themselves but also as part of their identity construction. But in the case of applying for university places, they disclose their past because they do not want to be dishonest. But for some of the participants in this study, the thought of being judged again for their past crimes was so distressing they did not disclose convictions through fear of rejection and undergoing further scrutiny which is explained in Debbie's narrative below:

Debbie: I went and applied for my PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) and it's the hardest thing I've ever done but I stayed on and did that. When they found out about my criminal record for that and it was in the same university centre, that was a little bit tougher [...]. I had to get a letter from Sarah who is the CEO (of her current employment), explaining that I'd been here for four and a half years. It's my past and it's not a problem, Theresa had to write me a thing saying, 'she excelled at all'!

Debbie attempted to overcome the barriers of entering higher education by withholding her past but her past came to light after on completing her degree she decided to enrol on a teacher training course. Despite her proven commitment to study and the university where she had gained her degree her past was scrutinised by a panel. She claims that it was as though she was being judged again for her past demeanours when all she wanted to do is move forward with her life:

Debbie: I felt very much like I'd been judged because of that. I got pulled into the office with the head and three people while they scrutinised me. I get it, if I was going to be working with vulnerable people; they needed to be sure who they were putting there.

There is no argument that for certain courses such as teaching whereby adults are coming into direct contact with children and vulnerable people, a full disclosure of one's criminal background is imperative, but perhaps the problem here is not so much about policy but how individual cases such as Debbies are handled by those making these judgments. Once the university eventually accepted Debbie's application, she successfully completed the PGCE which the university has since used as an example for other students to aspire to:

Debbie: I felt like I was under the spotlight at that moment in time. Having to rationalise why, what and why I wanted to do... but they allowed me to (study the PGCE) and didn't find any fault. And after there was one day out of that year course, and it was over and done with and I was allowed to finish. They now use my files to show me round to everybody else so there you go.

Debbie's present employers see her as an asset to the organisation which has led to increased self-confidence, self-respect and financial stability. Her past still invades her present at times because of the links to her former husband but she explains that whereas in the past she would have been frightened to respond to him she now has confidence:

Debbie: I can come to terms with it now - he was a bully. I can now be in the same room as him because with have got a child and we've now got a grandchild. That power he had he doesn't have any more. He will try and say odd names I've learnt that its control he wants and if you don't have to control...

The psychosocial model contributes to understanding Debbie's transition where she has been able to successfully transform her sense of self through strengthening her resilience and by changing her status within the social world in which she exists. Although Debbie had to face some hurdles at university, she did not have to endure total rejection which is what happened in Melody's case.

Melody, a 44-year-old student had one of the most serious offending backgrounds yet through studying in prison, proved that she was serious about changing her life and thus began her self-transformation. Yet despite this, she was initially rejected by the first university of her choice:

Melody: I had done my 'A' Level. I had done my GCSEs in jail. Started the 'A' Levels, got released and my probation officer was really good, took me to college. Got 'A' Levels in psychology, sociology and law, which I thought would be enough to get me in and I was just classed, being twenty-five, as mature. Applied for a DIPSW and it was 'NO'! "Someone with an extensive criminal record like yours will never, ever, get in any university in England or Wales." I've still got the letter. I've put it away for when I do get the degree.

Aligning with the research by the Prisoners' Education Trust (2017) Melody's narrative offers further empirical data demonstrating discriminative practices by universities which Pike (2014) also found study and at the time of writing, continues to be an area of contention. The university was more concerned about Melody's convictions than her academic abilities and achievements and she was therefore forced to regress towards a period of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014). According to Ruby below, she believes that she was rejected from five universities because of her criminal record although there is no evidence to support this. However, it is usual for ex-offenders to make this assumption because of their experiences of stigma and rejection but again this is not to say Ruby is mistaken either.

Ruby, 40, was involved in the sex industry and was a drug user. She now works as a substance abuse worker with other individuals with substance abuse issues. It was essential for Ruby to demonstrate her independence and gain a degree in criminology and sustain successful employment:

Ruby: Got rejected from five universities because I've a criminal conviction. I applied for social work and the reason I applied for social work was purely financial, because the pay is amazing. (The first) University wanted to know more about my convictions, but they'd already

lost my UCAS form so there was no way I was sending a DBS [background information of convictions] through the post to the university. I ended up with a proper snotty woman asking me my convictions, which clearly, I'm not going to share. Didn't get a place. The second university didn't even acknowledge my application.

The common denominator between Melody and Ruby's examples of being rejected by universities is that they both applied to study social work which requires background checks for all applicants. Melody and Ruby then both enrolled on criminology degrees which reinforces my earlier argument as to why perhaps students with criminal records often veer towards the social sciences where there are fewer restrictions and rather more opportunities. But Melody and Ruby's experiences and others with similar experiences need to be further explored because although Melody and Ruby have criminal convictions, why does this mean they cannot be social workers? The universities that rejected them because of their convictions are surely suggesting that the industry is off bounds to them? Yet we know that the Probation Services, for example, do employ people with convictions and ironically since Ruby was rejected by the university admissions team to study a social services degree, and her interview with me, she has gone on to work within both a prison and now the Probation Service. This directly instigates universities as being particularly discriminative because while they are rejecting individuals to study on degree programmes relating to specific industries because of criminal convictions. The industries for which they wish to work in are employing individuals with criminal convictions who have come through other routes such as studying criminology. The argument therefore is why are universities doing this?

In some instances, participants were treated more with contempt than being offered guidance such as in Melody's case where she was told that with her extensive criminal record she will 'never!' get in any university in England or Wales. She proved them wrong because this rejection had a significant impact on Melody's sense of self and when she was asked how this affected her emotionally, this was her response:

Melody: I went and got wrecked [drunk]. Inside? I felt "f..k you!" I felt like going to rob someone, or shoot someone, you know?

DH: So, it was anger?

Melody: Yes definitely.

DH: What about sadness though or anything like that? I'm trying to get a feel of your emotions.

Melody: I would have probably hit someone before I burst into tears in them days. I've never been a crier. My anger would come out as violence instead of 'boo hoo'. Sadness - I would probably internalise it then become aggressive.

DH: So, more frustration than anything then?

Melody: Yes.

Melody becomes angry and frustrated as a result of being rejected and as described in Matza's (1969) 'drift' theory she drifts back into offending as her social bonds are weakened (see also McNeill, 2012). But anguish and despair sit within an existentialist process which as this study has shown can lead to become positive change and transformation.

Melody's story includes a mixture of successes and unstable encounters more so than the rest of the sample which could be because she has only part desisted and so her reaction to rejection and disappointment was to reoffend. As well as being told she would never be accepted into any university due to her extensive criminal history, this was made worse when shortly after she was rejected for a job application:

Melody: [...] I applied for a job at the local drug alcohol service. I think I got down out of sixty people, got to the last eight but didn't get that. I thought 'bollocks to this'! I'm going back to crime!

Ultimately this led Melody to further consider re-offending which is a common self-prophesising reaction to continual rejection, although (as with Ruby), there is no indication that she was unsuccessful for the job because of her criminal record. In fact, considering she was shortlisted in the first instance would suggest her criminal record was not a contributing factor. However, continual rejections and such barriers that individuals encounter can have a significant impact on their self-esteem (Pike, 2014).

An important theme here is the language that is being used by others towards these vulnerable individuals. Individuals that work for organisations seem ill equipped to deal with people that have criminal convictions. Their responses are disrespectful, harmful, discriminative and unprofessional and not only lead to damaging a person's sense of self but creates an internal label where they begin (as with Melody) self-prophesise.

The symbolic interactionist approach towards language is an important perspective here (Mead, 1934). For example, Stacey is adamant not to be referred to as an 'ex-con' as this represents the archetypical 'old lag'. In Goffman's (1963) terms, it is a spoiled identity. Nevertheless, Stacey volunteered to take part in a documentary which exposed her former self, although she does regret taking part in the documentary:

Stacey: obviously I did that BBC documentary. It's probably one of the worst decisions of my life, in the sense that I didn't enjoy it. I thought I was portrayed differently that I am. It was all true, but I always looked 'pissed off' in it. They told me to dress a certain way, and I'm not like that. I am quite a happy go lucky individual. They didn't want me to have my hair down, stuff like that.

Stacey's transformation had been recognised by the media and so Stacey was invited to take part in a documentary and has also appeared in numerous newspaper articles. But the media recognising the fact that Stacey had made these transformations, insisted on portraying her as the stereotypical 'Ladette' (see Worrall, 2004). It was not until the clients she worked with recognised Stacey on television that they were able to make a mutual connection which earned her their respect. Until then, we can see the irony in the narrative above of how these other offenders had already made judgments about Stacey based on her current identity, job role and appearance. How Stacey presents herself is an ongoing and important process of her sense of self, so she clearly feels distraught at how the media presented her (ibid). The media created a spoiled identity for Stacey by portraying her as a poor, working class individual with 'attitude'.

Stacey experienced a total of 13 periods in custody which included five times in secure units, once in a young offender's institute and seven prison sentences. She argues that all her sentences were relatively short and wonders why she was never given a long-term prison sentence. This may have been significant towards her transformation because short sentences may have prevented her becoming institutionalised and perhaps this is why she was able to make her transition at such a young age at a time when most are at the peak of offending. Also, her hook for change was developing a student identity at an age where she was able to blend in with the majority of other undergraduate students and therefore her identity has not been spoiled to the extent as some other individuals in the same position.

Goffman's (1963) concept of the 'spoiled identity' explains the impact that stigmatisation can have on an individual's sense of self, but although stigma is mainly forced by other individuals, sometimes it was inadvertently inherited by the participants themselves through their own disclosure of criminal convictions when applying for university places. Over disclosing can not only cause stigmatisation from other individuals but also from universities which has resulted with participants having their applications rejected. For many this could have been avoided by understanding which convictions are 'spent' (not required by law to be disclosed) and 'unspent' (legally required to be disclosed). The problem is that once something is disclosed the university admissions have to consider the application based on this knowledge which is contentious because by rejecting someone based on irrelevant information demonstrates a lack of understanding by university staff of how to manage applications from individuals with criminal convictions.

5.5 Overcoming boundaries through education

As discussed in chapter 4, Ju Ju had achieved a prominent level of academic success and enjoyed a lifetime career as a psychologist and researcher before being sent to prison. However, education has continued to be an important part of his life which has enabled him to overcome many barriers and help other people through his role as a psychologist and researcher. Education does not always have the power to change lives though, such as in the case of Tom, 60 who has a history of sex offences but has since made exceptional progress in academe which boosted his self-esteem and gave him the confidence to confront his past. Therefore, although education has not opened as many doors for him as it has for others, it has still impacted on his sense of self and for him this was priority because of the anguish he had suffered as a child too. He studied sociology, social policy and criminology through the Open University completing a first-class honours degree on release from prison. Since his release, and with additional support, he completed a master's degree in social research methods and as Tom explains, education has completely transformed his sense of self:

Tom: Once I started achieving education, it challenged my thinking about [...] I couldn't do anything, I was a worthless nothing. I was useless. All the self-esteem issues I had struggled with as a child growing up being told I was useless and couldn't achieve it [...]. I was now in the small percentage

academically of others in the country. I could achieve.. and I can look at my graduation photos and I could go back home and say “look what I did!” and that makes me proud. That totally transformed how I see myself.

The psychosocial process of Tom’s transformation has included a combination of education, psychotherapy and self-reflection of his past life experiences which caused him deep seated trauma. Tom’s narrative suggests that higher education had enriched his life to the extent that employment was a secondary concern for him. Moreover, it was about what education had done to improve his sense of self and most importantly, a change in his own attitude and view towards himself (Giordano et al., 2002). This sits within Giordano et al’s third stage of their cognitive transformation process whereby individuals see themselves in a different role as a ‘replacement self’ begins to emerge. And as discussed in the literature review and chapter 4, this highlights the narrowness of prison education being focussed favourably towards gaining employment and supports the contrasting argument that prison education should focus more on its transformative benefits (Prisoners Education Trust, 2013). Also, because Tom was convicted of a sexual offence, he assumed that his entry into academe would be limited if not impossible which is why he studied through the Open University. But Tom claims his decision to study through the Open University was not just about accessibility into conventional university but also because of the concept of Open University.

Tom: I actually love the concept of the Open University because I think it’s the best value for money you will get. The materials are second to none. The resources they have available, the work they do with the BBC, the programs they produce and they are all over the world. I think are absolutely, they have superb materials. Most of the tutors are tutors at other universities anyway; they just do this as an extra. So, you get the best of all worlds - it’s hard to discipline. It’s hard to knuckle down and do it; it’s hard to be very self-disciplined.

The links between the Open University and prisons has been ongoing since the 1970s which demonstrates a strong historical understanding of the importance of prison education. We saw earlier how some of the participants in this study were held in high regard by the prison education department and even entrusted with teaching/mentoring responsibilities. Which demonstrates that in prison, possessing a good education can help to transform identities but also overcome physical boundaries within the prison education department. The prison

education staff utilised the participant's educational skills which became transferrable for their futures. For example, as indicated earlier, we shall see in Clarissa's narrative further in this section that her university allowed her to be able to deliver drug awareness sessions which had an important impact on her self-transformation.

This is not the case for everyone though because some leave prison without the possibility of continuing the roles they adopted in the prison education department. Once Tom was released from prison, he lost his privileged status as an educator and at the time of writing has remained unemployable. As discussed earlier this is largely because of his conviction being of sexual in nature but it also demonstrates the limitations of higher education and that it can in only go so far in enabling individuals to transform their lives. Tom's earlier explanation that education enabled him to view himself differently is emphasised by McNeill (2016) as an essential transition from the secondary stage of desistance to the tertiary stage of desistance. But equally, there needs to be a change in how others begin to view someone who is trying to change their lives and reintegrate so tertiary desistance includes not only how desisters view themselves but also how they are viewed by others (see chapter 6). The second part of the tertiary stage of desistance is where Tom is unable to progress but for others, a difficult past can inspire positive views from others who see their transformations as a triumph over all odds.

Clarissa, 41, had been a substance abuse user and eventually through education became involved in delivering workshops and seminars about her past experiences. She has also continued to work for the Council and has enjoyed delivering guest talks to college students about her previous struggle with substance abuse. Clarissa was a victim of child sexual abuse and later developed drug issues but in later life, education provided her with opportunities not least including accommodation where she was able to escape a volatile relationship:

Clarissa: They (university) were ace! They used to have me in delivering sessions. They used to have me in delivering drug awareness sessions. I got a lot of confidence from that.

Clarissa's experience has had a positive impact on her self-confidence and although this is very encouraging for others in the same predicament, it clearly highlights the inconsistencies of universities' treatment of ex-offenders.

For some of the individuals in this study education was more about changing how they viewed themselves, because until they were able to develop self-esteem it was impossible for them to move on with their lives. Their past experiences had caused trauma to such an extent that this was a major hurdle but yet one that each and every one has accomplished in their own way. The two individuals in this section had both overcome a history of being sexually abused which has left psychological scars. In Tom's case he went on to be sexual offender himself but although this has become a barrier for him finding employment, he has found education to be transformative which has enabled him to develop a psychosocial transformation of self. Clarissa has continued to succeed through education and employment and though her past experiences left an indelible mark on her, like the others it has made her a strong person.

5.6 The role of belief and trust

Many desisters refer to 'belief and trust' as having a powerful effect on their self-transformations (Rex, 1999) whereby they are strongly encouraged by someone else who believes in them and believes that they can and will change. They also believe that they have something to offer and that they can also help others (McNeill, et al., 2005). As mentioned earlier, how others view desisters is an essential aspect of the tertiary stage of desistance but it is also particularly pertinent during the primary stages of desistance where there is always the possibility of lulls in and out of offending. According to McNeill & Weaver (2007) during the primary stage of desistance, it can take considerable time to internalise self-belief and therefore it is often a period of instability.

Gerry, who is 36 years old, was one of most persistent offenders in the sample and had spent many years as a career criminal, mainly drug dealing. Yet after a lengthy criminal history, he began to try and make changes to his life. When Gerry was shown a little trust, it became a major 'turning point' in his transformation where he began to forge a new identity (Laub & Sampson, 2003). This is how he recalls the events around this period of this life:

Gerry: I started volunteering with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) through another fantastic bloke called Ben who worked with PCT at the time. He took me under his wing - invited me to their offices. I remember the first time I went into their office, it was an open office [...] I was walking past desks and I pass people where there were purses. There were wallets! there were handbags! mobiles and laptops! Thinking to myself, 'how the f..k is this guy trusting me with all this around me'? Just left me on a computer with all this around me! I think that was one of the biggest things. That trust someone put in me to sit next to a purse that wasn't mine and trusted me not to take it or touch it. I will always, always, remember that...always remember that. That was the biggest thing in my recovery... that someone gave me the trust.

It is interesting that Gerry refers to his transformation as 'recovery' which corresponds with Colman & Vander Laenen (2012) who found the same in their study of substance abusers. Their participants saw themselves as addicts rather than offenders which also links to Giordano et al's (2002) notion of cognitive shifts. Colman & Vander Laenen's study used Giordano et al's work as their conceptual framework but their theoretical underpinning stems from Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionist perspective because of the emphasis on symbolism through gestures. For example, the symbolic gesture of trust becomes Gerry's main catalyst for change - a major step that leads him towards his transformation. As Giordano et al. (2002) posits, there needs to be an initial decision to change in the early desistance journey which can come from any amount of experiences. This was an important change in Gerry's transformation as it forced him to re-evaluate and question his identity.

Gerry begins to evaluate how he had the opportunity to steal money while at the same time self-questions as to why someone who knows of his past, trusts him in an office surrounded by unattended handbags and purses. This was symbolic in that while he was sitting alone in the office surrounded by handbags and purses, he was situated within a world of criminal opportunity and temptation. Existentially, his sense of self was being challenged as he now had to self-question and find meaning from the world in which he had been accepted. This reflects the work by Rowe & Soppitt (2014) of desisters who reported that their commitment to desist from offending was rooted in the support that they received from staff with whom they had meaningful and sustained relationships of trust. This trust was developed through two programmes independent from the criminal justice system that they underwent and that was reported as a significant factor in gaining trust and confidence in their motivation to desist. But as this study has

shown, the same trust and confidence has been developed between prisoners, ex-prisoners and practitioners within the criminal justice system including prison officers and therefore in relation to the argument about prisons and desistance, there is supporting evidence in this study that it could work.

Gerry becomes very emotional when recalling the trust that was shown to him and we begin to see an emerging pattern of how newly formed social interactions and social bonds through acceptance can influence the transformation of self:

Gerry: Like within the drug treatment places you'd do your service user involvement thing and you'd be facilitating drugs, or you'd be pro-facilitating, but you were never allowed in the staff part. Now at PCT they allowed me in. As I say... gave me that trust and I felt really good. Every time I left that building I never touched anything. I wanted to succeed at that point. I wanted to get involved with that. I felt important, I never touched it. I felt good every time I left that building. Always had the thought, 'I'll just take twenty out, she won't notice', but never ever did. From that point on, I wouldn't say I never offended, but I never stole anything.

Gerry was adamant that being trusted gave him the desire to succeed which ultimately was the catalyst towards his primary stage of desistance (Giordano et al., 2002). But typically during the primary stage of desistance, although Gerry had stopped stealing, he did not completely abstain from offending (McNeill & Weaver, 2007). This was because the trust that he had been shown linked directly to those who had entrusted him whereas his involvement with other types of offending was not linked to his workplace. And although Gerry makes a very strong argument that the trust shown towards him was enough to stop him stealing, he still needed to believe in himself (ibid).

We can see how Gerry starts to believe in himself as he begins to reassess how he views deviant behaviours. This is consistent with Giordano et al's (2002), fourth cognitive transformation stage of desistance which is how the desister begins to change his/her views of deviant behaviour. He acknowledges this transformation by recalling his early deviance:

Gerry: At that point in time I don't think I would know (whether to accept legitimate employment). I think for arguments sake if it was a thousand pound a week I was bringing home, I still think there would have been some form of offending. Whether that would have been dealing; whether it would have gone bigger where my funds could take me, within organisational

crime or whatever, I don't know. I don't think any amount of money at that point would have stopped me offending.

Gerry admits that he would never have accepted a legitimate job had there been an opportunity for one because a 'criminal status' was more important, but as we can see in his narrative above, he begins to evolve within his workplace where he now holds down legitimate employment. Not only does this give him a legitimate source of financial stability but also a transformed sense of self and new identity. Giordano et al. (2002) view this stage which Gerry has now reached as the final stage of the desistance process because the desister no longer see deviant behaviours as positive, viable, or even personally relevant. And so, it is at this stage where this study diverges from desistance theory and advances the notion that the participant's transitions continue beyond desistance through a continual psychosocial life span (Erikson, 1959).

We can see Gerry's self-transformation throughout this study where he begins to reject his deviant identity that once defined who he was and aspired to be, to developing a renewed identity as a legitimate employee and work colleague (Giordano et al., 2002). However, at this stage he still continues to drift in and out of crime (Matza, 1964) but becomes selective about the types of crimes which could be argued, is a form of desistance referred to earlier as a zig-zag process (Weaver & McNeill, 2007; Bilby, et al., 2013).

Eventually, as time passed and Gerry began to progress through his employment and take up education, he would make one of the most remarkable transformations of all the participants because although he was one of the most persistent offenders, he has continued to have one of the most stable transitions.

Charlie was unlike Gerry in that he was not a persistent offender and therefore as Maruna (2008) argues desistance could not apply to him because his offence was a 'one off' yet in terms of his self-transformation, but like Gerry, belief from others became his main catalyst for change. He was euphoric when he was offered employment but still continued to internalise the shame (Maruna, 2001) he felt for his past offending and the stigma attached to his ex-offender identity. At times the continual transformation that this study argues persists beyond desistance can be as much about the individual not being able to move on.

Leibrich (1993) found shame to be a major factor in her participant's decision to desist from crime and because most of her sample only had one or two convictions, this corresponds with Charlie's case but also makes a distinction between the role of shame amongst those with fewer convictions than those with lengthy criminal careers such as Gerry (Maruna, 2001). Before Charlie was offered any trust, he went through several difficult periods from the outset of leaving prison in 2005 when he had to register with a local doctor:

Charlie: When I came out of prison, I had to change doctors because my mum worked at a doctor's surgery. They asked me if I could change doctors just because she had been so traumatised by having her son in prison and all that. So I did and a doctor said: "what do you want to do"? and I said, "I might try and go into teaching one day or go back to social working" and he said, "no you won't!" and that really hurt me and I thought - 'f..k you'! [...] I made a determined effort that I would prove him wrong. My case went to the Department of Education and they said I could become a teacher if I wanted to, so I would like to think that if I ever want to go down the social work line, that they would have the attitude that this person could offer.

Charlie internalised this derogatory comment from his doctor which challenged his sense of identity but through the psychosocial process of self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943, 1954), he was also able to use these experiences as a pivot to overcome the inevitable anxieties and anguish, much like the participants whose existential crises led to self-change. This exchange may have had a greater impact on Charlie's sense of self considering it came from someone in a position of authority within a profession. But when the participants were able to utilise their negative experiences to strengthen their resilience and determination, their persistence finally resulted in positive experiences (McAdams, 2006). We can see this process when Charlie is offered employment:

Charlie: When I came out in prison August 2005, I didn't think that I would succeed. Then I started volunteering for NACRO (National Association for the Rehabilitation of Offenders) in about January 2006 [...] then they offered me a job, and then I went home and was very emotional because I thought wow! Somebody believes in me. I can begin again. Then when the doctor said that sort of thing, I thought well I could go one of two ways I can either implode and be crushed by this or I can use it and fight and be determined [...]

The negative comments from Charlie's doctor seemed to trigger a determination to succeed and prove himself and the belief and trust afforded to both Gerry and

Charlie ignited a passion to succeed. Through their own self determination and through forging new alliances, they developed a new resilience which enabled them to overcome negative experiences and obstacles. Charlie's and Judy's examples both correspond in the sense that their doctors behaved discriminatively towards them but there are other examples of such attitudes from people in positions of authority. For example, Melody discussed her experience of discrimination by the university admissions tutor and it has since emerged that this is all too common (Prisoners Education Trust, 2017).

Belief and trust evidently had a powerful impact on the participant's transformations and forged strong connections to individuals and communities. This raises another question of why difficult experiences would severely defeat some people while spur others on and it could be argued that those with the strongest social bonds are more able to overcome difficulties than those with weak social bonds (Hirschi, 1969). Charlie had maintained strong social bonds with family and friends from the time of his offending, through his time in prison and after release from prison. Another explanation is that hardships strengthen an individual's resilience and as one continues to overcome barriers and setbacks, they develop stronger and even new identities.

5.7 Conclusion

As a conceptual framework, Giordano et al's (2002) cognitive transformation theory continues to offer a sound basis from where to examine the participants' transitions from the early stages in prison (see chapter 4) through to their reintegration into society. The cognitive transformation theory provides a psychosocial perspective of the participant's journeys and by analysing their narratives it has been possible to gauge an understanding of their ongoing conflicts. The limitations include a dearth of literature surrounding the stages of liminality throughout this thesis (Healy, 2010, 2014). Education provided the participants with a hook for change (see Giordano et al., 2002) but whereas in chapter 4 these hooks were evoked by imprisonment, this chapter discussed how they are invoked by external factors - mainly higher education. An alternative concept of desisters seeking a 'replacement self' and casting off old identities, is that there is a growing body of academics who use their past experiences as ex-offenders/prisoners to inform their teaching and research. This links back to the

concept of liminality whereby some participants do maintain past and present identities while overcoming the subjective anguish of liminality. And through negotiating the ex-offender label the participant narrative becomes an essential analytical tool to negotiate their future identities using a 'looking glass concept' by drawing from my insider/outsider self and share lived experiences. Education enables individuals to exit sometimes lengthy periods of liminality and facilitates their self-transformations, but universities sometimes create further barriers (The Prisoners Education Trust, 2017; Pike, 2014).

Chapter 6: The pains of desistance

6.1 Introduction

The pains of desistance include many psychological and sociological obstacles which are often absent within the desistance literature which as Nugent & Schinkel (2016) argue are generally presented in a positive light with themes of ‘making good’ (Maruna, 2001) and generativity (Erikson, 1959) but desistance can be a painful experience (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). In parallel to Syke’s (1958) pains of imprisonment concept, I am able to use the data to illustrate the pains of the desistance process, but more importantly how the participants in this study continue to overcome them through progressive psychosocial changes (Giordano et al, 2002).

This process is evidenced from the participant’s ‘painful narrative’ where they reflect on their experiences of isolation, liminality (Healy, 2010) and hopelessness (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). Essentially though, these painful experiences were an important part of shaping identities (McAdams, 2006). A rite of passage considers the difficult and sometimes impossible transition from the stages of liminality to assuming new statuses through integrating within reference groups (Shibutani 1955, 1962; Urry, 1973). These transitions towards reference groups were also an essential process of how others viewed the participants (McNeill, 2016).

The ‘redemptive self and generativity’ considers the notion of redeemability - a concept whereby desisters try and make amends for their wrongdoings. Maruna (2001) refers to these individuals as ‘wounded healers’ (p.102) who use their past experiences to help others in their roles as counsellors. This also relates to Arthur Frank’s (1995) concept of ‘the wounded storyteller’ which essentially involves a narrative relating to ill health and can be translated to the wounded healer’s past struggles with mental health issues and substance abuse, and which offer an essential insight into their journeys towards becoming wounded healers. The importance of Maruna’s ‘wounded healer’ and Frank’s ‘wounded story teller’ is that it involves a narrative process which enables individuals to share important

lived experiences which not only acts as an essential self healing process but offers others hope that they too can transform their lives.

McNeill's (2016) notion of tertiary desistance and 'belonging to a moral community' draws on socially environmental factors where successful reintegration enables further psychosocial transformations. This is where their past lives continue to impact on their sense of selves because of how others view them, but also because of how they begin to view themselves (Weaver, 2013).

6.2 The painful narrative

The painful narrative is explored as an essential process towards gaining biographical data which has been discussed throughout this thesis. As I said in chapter 1 'narrative criminology and desistance' analysing the painful narrative is as essential as analysing the positive narrative (McAdams, 2006) within desistance thus furthering an understanding of the psychosocial transitions. The participants had to overcome continual barriers and obstacles that may have and do prevent others from continuing with their goals, but it was through the more difficult experiences that they developed an unwavering resilience. From the start of their desistance journeys, some have overcome the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) through a desire to change and develop new identities and resilience. With this in mind, it could therefore be argued that for some, (although painful) experiencing anxieties and anguish was as important for their transformation of self as their positive experiences because these painful experiences led to catalysts for change (Giordano et al. 2002), while for others they merely added to their already existing feelings of anguish and anxiety.

Here Judy draws on painful memories to explain how she has transformed her 'self.' Judy's narrative was very emotional and somewhat melancholic as she continued to talk about her life experiences. However, it became clear that drawing on both her traumatic as well as positive experiences was essential in demonstrating how both had been important towards her transformation of self:

Judy: There was one occasion when a woman walked up to me, and I was sat at a bus stop miserable and the woman walked up to me and said are

you homeless. I said yes and she pulled a tenner out of her purse and gave it to me. So, there's things like that - but overall a very shit experience.

DH: I can tell that because you're getting quite teary eyed.'

Judy: Yes...I got a job in a homeless charity in London and I've been here ever since.

Judy is very emotional when she recalls her encounter with a member of the public who handed her a ten pound note. This gesture of kindness would impact on Judy's sense of self so much that she is able to recall it many years later but not just as something that impacted on her emotionally, also as something that strengthened her resilience which she later extended through her work with vulnerable homeless people. Resilience is not inherent but rather involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone but strengthened through social bonds and the support from others (McNeill, 2016). Reliving their pasts through the interview process was a painful process for the participants because they do visit painful narratives while explaining their journeys. Yet their narratives suggest how important they view their painful experiences as well as their positive experiences which further presents a diversity of crises as discussed previously. For example, Judy's employment is relevant to her own painful experiences of being homeless and though her narrative is linked to giving back (Maruna, 2001) it focusses on the more tragic times in her life (Frank, 1995). Judy recalled, quite emotionally, an encounter when she was homeless and a stranger's kind gesture that has stayed with her ever since. She still finds her life experiences difficult to talk about but clearly feels the need to relieve her pain as much as her happier times which are balanced with accepting or even embracing the pains we suffer (McAdams, 2006). Judy's narrative of painful experiences provides us with some insight into how she develops resilience through her determination to leave her environment and prove to others how she has changed through education:

Judy: I went to see someone in the [prison] education wing there and asked her about colleges because I had the idea in my head that I had to get out of Blackpool. Nothing was going to change unless I got out of Blackpool. She gave me some information about them, but then I got out, carried on as before (homeless and using drugs).

Here Judy recalls how the prison environment gave her a sense of stability and structure (Pike, 2014) which offers an additional insight into how release from prison can create isolation for desisters within society (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016).

She was keen to start a course of education but was then released from prison after which she regressed to her previous existence living on the streets and drug taking. However, she had the opportunity to transform her life through education again when she was returned to prison and regained the structure that she felt had supported her when she was previously in prison. Nugent & Schinkel's (2016) pains of desistance study can explain what is actually happening to Judy's sense of self through their use of the term 'displacement'. As Judy begins to make a new life for herself and leave her associates and family behind in Blackpool, she feels isolated once leaving prison. This is one of the more distinctive pains of desistance where despite having the need to leave negative things in one's life behind, it still leaves a feeling of emptiness. Nugent & Schinkel argue that their participant's 'new-found introversion' caused by alienating oneself also meant that they did not recognize themselves, and that they had lost their sense of self and personal identity (p.572). For almost all, there was a sense of displacement, a sense that they were living a life with which they were unfamiliar. This helps to explain what is happening to Judy's sense of self where through her attempts to improve her life chances she leaves her old life behind, but in doing so also becomes displaced and loses her sense of self. Although Judy has changed her life and now regards her past as irrelevant, her transformation of self has never been completely accomplished because of how her past impacts on her sense of self.

This happened to Dylan, but it was influence from a completely unexpected source. Dylan, 27 already had a difficult start in life which had been influenced by his family's criminal lifestyle, but it was a lifestyle he was accustomed to, however he tried to escape it by going to university. He had a difficult start at university when he was ostracised by his fellow students after he disclosed his past during a seminar but did eventually graduate with a degree in criminology and has continued to postgraduate study. He draws heavily on his pains of desistance when he recounts the moment his fellow students began to disassociate from him:

Dylan: I declared I was an ex-offender. Leading up to this I was constantly spoken to by the rest of the course. Invited for cups of coffee. Then as soon as I declared that I was an ex-offender, I was instantly pushed to one side by the rest of the course. It must have got out to the seminar and on the rest of the course. I stopped getting asked to go for cups of coffee. I stopped getting messages on Facebook from my fellow students and also, I

was in lectures and they had obviously been ‘Googling’ my former crimes and laughing about it behind my back, whilst I was in lectures. I felt like that kid in school again. It really affected my confidence. The lecturers here have been absolutely brilliant. So, so supportive. I ended getting really depressed about it and had to repeat the first year. I just didn’t say. I didn’t want to make a fuss. Well I did say something actually, but I told them to get it off my chest. I’ve learnt now that it’s good to talk about things isn’t it, rather than bottle it up.

Being shunned and outcast by his former friends was the last thing Dylan had expected and talking about his experiences at university, he recounts the impact these negative experiences had on his sense of self. Dylan was in a difficult predicament when he was excluded by his peers which forced him to make the decision to re-take his first year at university, yet through this anxiety and anguish and a strengthening of resilience, he still managed to achieve his degree.

Dylan is clearly passionate about his roots and in an attempt to defend his ‘own people’ it backfires. His sense of self and personal identity was lost through this disconnection with others creating a sense of displacement and isolation (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). Sociologically, Dylan was labelled (Becker, 1963) and stigmatised (Goffman, 1963) and shamed (Braithwaite, 1989) by his peers due his criminal past and therefore excluded from his circle of so called friends. The impact this had on Dylan’s sense of self resulted in him having to repeat his first year of study - already a period of instability and vulnerability.

Dylan’s experiences are paralleled in Karen Graham’s (2014) study of male prisoner’s past school experiences which revealed their feelings of isolation after being excluded - memories that resonated with their experiences of imprisonment. This was described by Dylan earlier when after being ostracised by his peers he said: ‘I felt like that kid at school again’. Graham’s sample reported that as a result of being excluded from school, their friendships were tested because they were treated as being undeserving and therefore alienated from their peers:

What is common to the narratives is that the men were recognised as naughty kids, bad kids, kids with behavioural problems (and so on) at an early age, and these definitions seemed to be widely accepted by the majority of teaching staff, peers and the men themselves. These definitions or labels continued on from primary to secondary school, securing them reputations of tough or problem kids (Graham, 2014, p. 830).

Being isolated impacted on Dylan's sense of self during his time at university as he becomes socially outcast by his peers and as with Judy, he too felt displaced. An essential process of Dylan's desistance and self-transformation was that he had become reintegrated within the university culture (as Judy had) but would now have to start again from the beginning, this time with more caution about disclosing his past, silenced within an environment which encourages sharing challenging information.

As McNeill (2006) argues, sustained desistance improves when ex-offenders develop social links with people in different social hierarchies because it enables them to access wider social resources. Getting jobs, taking up new hobbies and being exposed to new experiences assist desisters in 'moving on' and building a new life, rather than merely existing as in remaining in a stage of liminality (Healy, 2010; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Weaver, 2013). But although Dylan had developed social links at university they were then severed, however, rather than returning to criminal activity he continued with his education. Dylan's account highlights the possible vulnerabilities when divulging certain information and links back to an under explored area within biographical research of people with convictions and over disclosing (see chapter 5, section 5.3) and also demonstrates Dylan's resilience and ability to overcome this painful period of his life. Sadly, Dylan was one of the participants who has since regressed to taking drugs and though he is continuing to rehabilitate himself, his transformation is a continual struggle.

The participant's experiences of education in relation to their self-transformation are varied. For example, some of those who had suffered domestic and sexual abuse as children felt that education added to their painful memories which was one of the most alarming findings of this study. This linked directly to their suffering both in childhood and adulthood whereby knowledge gave them an insight into their own suffering (Frank, 1995). Some of the participants who were victims of abuse and domestic violence did not realise what they were subjected to was wrong, until they developed further insight through education. Although education provides further insight, it can be a negative, painful experience which sociologically speaking, invoked an insight into the injustices they had experienced and suffered. Interestingly, this resonates significantly with

Frederick Douglass's (1851) classic works as a freed slave who claimed education gave an insight into all the injustices of the world.

Len, 48, was the only life sentence prisoner in the sample and has not been able to completely transform because of the depth of trauma he has suffered. He came from an abusive, dysfunctional family life dominated by his patriarchal father where he was abused and beaten. Being a victim of domestic violence and bullying would have had a detrimental effect on his initial experiences of studying sociology. Len found that education not only opened his eyes to the world around him, but he became confused and more sensitised to his childhood traumas as he gained more insight and a realisation that he had been a victim of abuse:

DH: Have you found learning therapeutic?

Len: No, the more I've learned, the more confused I've become [...]. Sociology is the subject that really screwed my head up, because all the life that I had accepted up to that point, hit me as being totally wrong. You know being beaten up by your dad - leather belt buckle and his steel toe cap boots, was all wrong. Up to that point it wasn't. I wanted to be like my dad. I wanted to be a friend of my dad [...].

From a psychosocial perspective, education has caused Len more psychological trauma which affected his relationship with his father although he has explained that he does not blame his parents for his own wrongdoings.

Jimmy found education to be both enlightening and at the same time a painful experience, claiming that education opens one's eyes to all the injustices in the world through gaining greater knowledge. He argues that the prison system assumes prisoners are 'basically thick or stupid' but actually being a criminal takes a lot of skill. He feels the education they provide is 'patronising':

Jimmy: Bear in mind as well what education brings you. It brings enlightenment. You can see out of the box...when you become educated. In your dumb ignorance you just plod along in your own wee world. You do your own little thing. But when you became enlightened to the ways of the world and how things actually work and you see the corruption, you see the wrong doings by people of standing, people of note.

At times it is suggested that it is best to remain ignorant to what is happening in the world around us and that while education has opened doors and opportunities, it has also given them insight into an unfolding, unpleasant existence.

Chloe said she had a confidence crisis during her second year at university because of not having dealt with personal issues:

Chloe: I think I was thinking, I don't know why I am doing this [studying at university]. It's hard to get a balance between doing it because of your own experience. I just felt like I needed to get away from it. I don't think I had processed enough of my own stuff and perhaps it was still too close.

DH: Too raw?

Chloe: Yes and that kind of explains the over disclosing things like that. I think it's really challenging and I think a lot of people, whether they have personal issues, experience with substance misuse or going to prison, not everyone is cut out to do that. Anyway, I got away from it. I didn't really focus on anything like that in my Master's - that was the last thing I did.

Chloe is referring to the cognitive transformation (Giordano et al., 2002) stages that are an essential process for change, but the pains of education was an unexpected finding within this study because of its hypothesising that education could only produce positive experiences which were a major contribution towards the desistance process. Len was disowned by other family members in later life for highlighting his abuse but until he began studying sociology he was unaware that his early life was even dysfunctional. At 48, he still breaks down and is deeply ashamed for taking another person's life for which he received a sentence known as 'Her Majesty's Pleasure' (HMP) at the age of 15. This somewhat confirms that his childhood was a significant factor towards his offending as predicted by others from a very young age:

Len: I had my hand around a student's neck and he was turning purple, and it was predicted that one day I would take somebody's life. [...]. Very few instances I actually initiated aggression. It was an outpouring if you like. ... And yeah, eventually, I did take someone's life.

Len talks about how a person's upbringing is often used as the main focus when examining prisoner's identities and can see how some of his fellow inmates have also come from very 'damaged backgrounds':

Len: ... it's not just because they come from dysfunctional backgrounds, it's they've come from damaged backgrounds. It's one of my sad reflections of my upbringing. I don't say that's why I committed this offence, I wish I could identify specifically why I did what I did, but it contributed to the mind set of what led me to it. I wasn't blaming my dad, I wasn't blaming my mum. I was the one that did it, but it (upbringing) contributes to it.

Len's narrative tries to make a distinction between 'dysfunctional' and 'damaged' which suggests 'damaged' is something much deeper than dysfunctional. Despite this he does not identify that his upbringing was a direct cause of his later offending. There were some problems within his upbringing that affected his sense of self and attributed to his behaviour. but he does not specifically blame his parents. We can see within Len's narrative a thought process of trying to understand himself and make sense of what led to him to commit murder.

Therefore, there were varying levels of pain for each of the participants when revisiting painful narratives. Some of their experiences were more recent than others and all had different levels of psychosocial traumas. Also, for some, reliving their past enabled them to negotiate their past and new identities and make sense of their lived experiences, while for others, reliving their pasts was clearly still very raw. McAdams (2006) argues that reliving painful experiences enables someone to make sense of the past in relation to later behaviours and current anxieties. Therefore, if we are to draw from McAdam's theory, painful narratives can share profound memories of intimacy in their lives as those times when they shared with others deep sadness and pain. The importance of this concept is the psychosocial process of forging new identities through narratives of trauma and healing within different environments.

There is a contrast within the participant's narratives whereby some feel revisiting their pasts enabled them to make sense of their journeys while others are clearly traumatised. Only two participants within the sample said they found learning to be a negative experience, but their powerful narratives do shed some light on an underexplored area of the pains of desistance and supports Nugent & Schinkel's argument of the need for further in-depth analysis in this area. For others, learning and entering the higher education community was central to their psychosocial transformations as the environment allowed them to escape their surroundings but also develop a 'replacement self' which as McNeill (2016) argues involves becoming part of a moral community. The cognitive changes combined with the process of learning and social environmental factors enabled a psychosocial process whereby the participants were able to forge new identities.

6.3 A rite of passage

Changes in an individual's status are sometimes marked by elaborate rituals which commonly denote movement through the age cycle, marital status, and social mobility (Hart, 1976). These rites of passage (Turner, 1967) are also associated with the desistance process and one of the most dominant explanations of why individuals leave crime (Maruna, 2011). But as Maruna (2011) argues, there is no formal rite of passage associated with the desistance process arguing that while the criminal justice system has a rigorous and strict rite of passage for those who enter it starting from arrest to court trial and imprisonment, the desistance process does not. But as chapter 4 highlighted, the experience of imprisonment inadvertently created a rite of passage through the educational route.

Sid confirms that for him, getting married while in prison became an essential rite of passage which he is very proud of and explains how pivotal this has been in his own desistance journey and transformation of self (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Marriage is one of the most widely studied topics of life course criminology and the contemporary consensus that it promotes desistance from crime (Skardhamar, et al., 2015), but it does depend on the stability of the marriage. Drawing on previous studies, Maruna (1999) argues that though marriage creates strong bonds it is mainly dependant on the strength of the marriage.

Sid: Bella [Sid's wife] has been pivotal in me getting to this point as has education, so Laub and Sampson were right. But you can't get away from the subjective stuff that Maruna talks about. It's alright having these turning points but there needs to be internal changes, motivation, determination and all that, hope and all that sort of subjective stuff and identity change which Laub and Sampson don't really.... They think it's more about behaviour where as Maruna is more about internal cognitive changes, changing thoughts, attitudes and identities.

Because Sid is a criminologist he is able to analytically describe his own rite of passage by drawing on his knowledge of desistance to explain the importance of his marriage, education (Sampson & Laub, 1993, 2003) and internal changes such as motivation and determination (Giordano et al. 2002; Maruna, 2001). But however important Sid's transitions have been to his process of passage, it is as essential for him to maintain his past identity: He makes the point that Sampson &

Laub's (2003) studies emphasise external factors such as education and marriage as being influential on desistance, but how equally important studies are that emphasise internal, cognitive and identity shifts (Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna, 2001).

Although Sid has made transitions through his academic work and personal life, he still feels that it is important to hold on to the ties he has with his friends from his past life before he entered academe.

Sid: There's a thrill about roofing, it's nice being up on a f.....g roof top in London being able... There was something about the experientially about roofing I love the physical work of it which does tie in with masculinity. There's a number of reasons why I would go back to doing it, it's good to earn. I earn very good money doing roofing a day's roofing. I could probably get £100 cash, bosh, if not more sometimes. It's sunny you're out of this academic, physical work, you're with your mates, you're having a laugh [inaudible]. I guess in another way it's a way of seeing my mates as well I don't see them that often, because I live in a different part of London to them now. This takes up a lot of my life and family so it's a bit of a social thing as well.

We can see that maintaining links to the past can be very important which is one of the reasons why the transformation of self is never fully accomplished - because of an individual's own resistance to leave behind their roots, cultural and social background. Sid seems to have found a balance where he is able to successfully live between the two social worlds belonging to his past and present so while he is enjoying socialising with his lifelong friends, he is also very proud about gaining his doctorate degree which enabled his upward social mobility.

Germaine, 29, has encountered more obstacles than most which could be largely attributed to the media attention she received because of the severity of her family's criminal activity which she was caught up in and which made it difficult for her to hide her past. She is interested in the fashion and design industry which led to her gaining a degree, but during her studies she claims that despite her good intentions to move on with her life her transformation was hindered by her probation officer who did little to help or encourage her aspirations:

Germaine: I had bleeding probation with the claws in my back - useless. [...] They were trying to meddle. 'What are you doing? Why are you going back to uni (university)? You need to come and do courses with us because you need to be rehabilitated! [...] I had to do my own 'OASys' report [see below]. All these other reports. They shoved me in a room and said, 'fill this in'. I just thought it was normal paperwork. I'd never been to probation before. Probation was useless. If anything, they held me back. Absolute nightmare! I'm sure it was because they didn't want me to go back to 'uni' (university). I felt like they didn't want me to progress. Whether it was full time, part time or just to do some kind of short twelve-week course.

Germaine refers to her 'OASys' (Offender Assessment System) report above which the probation and prison services across the country use for assessing the risks and needs of an offender. As we can see by Germaine's narrative, her self-transformation through higher education was being hindered by her probation officer who was more concerned about rehabilitative course work. This exposes some of the difficulties that are involved in making transformations while being a university student and serving a probation order or being on licence. It relates back to the divided self by creating conflict both internally and externally. Internally, balancing these dual identities can cause a dislocation of one's habitus whereby one's past collides one's future (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Because of the emphasis on 'risk', the probation services can sometimes make this situation more difficult by continually re-enforcing the ex-offender label through constantly reminding probationers of their past offending and what is expected of them. Some of the participants found probation services more of a hindrance by being obstructive (Pike, 2014).

Germaine felt that even her own probation officer did not want her to progress when support and encouragement of leading a crime free life should be paramount. Her probation officer had Germaine filling in forms and attending their 'rehabilitation' courses rather than attending (to their surprise) university. This again is consistent with Pike's (2014) study, where her findings showed that amongst other organisations, the Probation Trusts had obstructive and discriminatory policies and procedures. In Pike's study, this caused communication problems and at least one participant was recalled back to prison on a 'technicality'.

Farrall & Calverley (2006) found that while probationers were tackling problems relating to accommodation, family relationships and employment (all key to assisting desistance from crime) few probation officers appeared willing to engage in assisting probationers with their efforts in these matters. It is also interesting that Charlie, one of the participants in this study, admitted himself that he had a poor attitude towards offenders during his time working within the Probation Service:

Charlie: [...] if somebody was telling me about their drug use, I used to think “oh this person is bull-shitting now; I bet it’s a lot more than that”. Basically, I had already pigeon holed, judged somebody and probably written them off and gone in with loads of prejudices before interviewing them. So, one thing that I would do differently now, I would, and I do think how would I feel because I have sat on that side of a desk where a professional is probably gone in with lots of prejudices towards me and thought, I’m lying and talking out of my back side. How would I feel, and I would angry and hurt and judged and it’s not nice. So, I would like to feel that if I was in probation now, that I would be far more believing and understanding, empathetic and trusting.

Charlie’s experience of imprisonment forced him to re-assess his attitude towards other offenders which if anything highlights an internal problem with attitudes. Experiences with the probation services were mixed, for example, Dylan felt they had never helped him whereas Melody said her probation officer helped her find a college place.

Jimmy, 47, on the other hand had one of the worst experiences and recounts how he lost his education because of the actions of his probation officer:

Jimmy: It’s amazing how comfortable you’re with police and lawyers and judges, whereas you go into education like university, you have esteem for these people. You know that you don’t fit - you know that you’re an anomaly - so you’re always on the back foot. I went along for interview and did really, really well. So well in fact, that they let me straight on to second year. So, I got to miss out first year and went straight on to second year which was a surprise in itself. I was liberated, I was attending university, I was doing pretty good. I was still on parole and I got recalled that was a huge blow. It was a heavy hammer hitting, I’m going to lose all this work I’ve done, I felt that I was going to lose it I really did. I thought I’m half way through my degree and I felt I’ve f....d this up. It’s self-recriminating. Fortunately, when I got back to prison there was no charges there was simple breach in parole conditions by some over-zealous parole officer [probation officer].

Jimmy explains in depth here how although he was doing well at university and was happy with his progress, at first he felt as though he would not fit within the environment. This links to his habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) and his feelings of not being worthy, but it was not the university environment that hindered his progress but an ‘over-zealous’ probation officer who like in Germaine’s case was absorbed about the risk they felt he posed. University was a transformative experience for Jimmy, but the probation service caused disruption.

Although for many individuals like Jimmy, education can have transformative benefits, it has limitations when it comes to certain groups of ex-prisoners. For example, Tom’s sex offences restricted his access to conventional university life, but he was able to enter higher education through the Open University which for him, was paramount because education enabled him to make a complete transformation. One of the major difficulties faced by many ex-prisoners is the struggle to find employment which can have a major impact on their sense of self but for someone in Tom’s situation, there is a double stigmatisation because of the nature of his offences (Milner, 2017, Hulley, 2016). Although, Tom achieved an enriched sense of self through education he feels it enabled him to question his life, and the behaviours of others also. He does accept his predicament with employment so has found a charitable organisation which has provided him with an opportunity to work while remaining in education:

Tom: It’s not the prison because major firms have a sense of social responsibility; many of them, the Asda’s and others employ ex-offenders - unless you’re a sex-offender. My criminal conviction has prevented me from gaining any meaningful paid employment, and can create difficulties in relationships. I have, however, gained acceptance and unpaid charity work. I have also remarried and now live in a sheltered housing scheme in London. My educational achievements have transformed my identity, especially the way I view myself, and given me a sense of purpose (personal correspondence, 2015).

No matter what Tom set out to achieve, he was never going to be allowed to totally re-integrate. He would have limited academic access which means he would have to study through distance learning and would struggle with social mobility. This is not to say that the transitional processes that lead to desistance cannot be achieved by sex offenders (see Milner, 2017; Hulley, 2016), but rather it may take longer than it would for most ex-offenders and will require additional support. Hulley (2016) found in her study of sexual offenders and desistance, that

desistance from sexual offending is argued to be a prolonged process, as the realisation of a non-offending prosocial identity occurs through the enactment of conventional roles. As seen in Tom's case, a sexual conviction presents additional barriers to attaining conventional roles, but Tom has achieved a graduate status through distance learning. He has married and has also managed to gain work within the voluntary sector, all of which are 'rites of passage' (Turner, 1967). And although Tom's convictions create added restrictions, most of the participants in this study have and will remain to have some barriers towards conventional roles because many convictions will remain 'unspent' (see Unlock, 2018).

Although the rites of passage (Turner) concept signifies movement from one status passage to another (Hart, 1976), as we have seen, for the desister, this is often hindered through the actions of others including probation officers, employers and universities. The lack of support by the probation officers discussed in this study, supports Maruna's (2011) point that the desistance process lacks anything representing a rite of passage. If we are to learn anything from this, we can do so from the examples in this study where the participants adapted their own rites of passage (Turner, 1967) through entry into university, getting married and employment (paid and voluntary), and reintegration towards a conventional society (Giordano et al., 2002; McNeill, 2016). And despite the often, undermining obstacles from universities (Prisoners Education Trust, 2017) and the Probation Service (Pike, 2014), the participants continually strived to overcome whatever barriers confronted them.

6.4 The redemptive self and generativity

The redemptive self and generativity in relation to desistance and the transformation of self can be best explained through Maruna's (2001) notion of the 'wounded healer' whereby the participants attempt to make amends for their past wrongdoings through the work they do as counsellors and advisors. And also through Arthur Frank's (1995) narrative of the 'wounded storyteller' they drew on their poignant accounts of their struggles with trauma, substance abuse, alcohol and relationships. Both of these approaches lead to a redemptive script'. but the wounded healer and wounded storyteller become combined through what Frank

refers to as 'restitution stories' whereby the narrative follows the thread that things will get better.

From a traditional psychosocial perspective, the concept of the redemptive self can be attributed to Erikson's (1959) seventh stage of his psychosocial 'life span' theory, 'generativity' which is used by desistance theorists to understand redeemability. Generativity links to the redemptive self (Maruna, 2001) whereby individuals feel that they should be able to contribute something meaningful to society and leave a legacy and if they fail to achieve this, they feel like they have been an unproductive member of the society. This notion also adds to the overall argument of this thesis, as mentioned above - that desistance is more about a process of identity transformations. Also, it is continual and if there was an end to it, why would individuals feel the need to continually 'give back'? (ibid). Their past remains within their future identities channelled through the work they do with others. But Maruna argues that the 'redemptive self' concept is barely acknowledged within mainstream society, arguing that people with convictions should be allowed the chance to redeem themselves through employment, education and generally making amends.

Gemma, 34 had been a habitual drug user and was stigmatised by her local community, yet later found work with the church and later as a senior substance abuse practitioner:

Gemma: I started volunteering in church's drugs project [...] at the moment. It does all the food, homeless like a soup kitchen for the homeless. I started volunteering for them because I started thinking I wanted work in this field. As a lot of people do when they are in recovery and think I want to work in the drugs field. I say to a lot of them now go and try something else first because it is hard.

Consistent with Maruna (2001) who purports that desisters often turn to generative occupations, Gemma claims lots of recovering addicts choose the same field to work in to help others. Her claim is evidenced within previous studies such as in Brown (1991) who as mentioned earlier, coined the term, 'professional exes' (p.219). These are individuals who have 'exited their deviant careers by replacing them with occupations in professional counselling. During their transformation professional exes, utilise vestiges of their deviant identity to legitimate their past deviance and generate new careers as counsellors' (ibid).

Debbie has also become involved in working with those she can identify with who are suffering from addictions. She finds her work very rewarding and has been given very encouraging support to succeed:

Debbie: I have worked with people and I can see their journeys changing and it's the best thing ever [...]. You do it because it's rewarding genuinely helping people and you know you're making a difference [...]. It's not about the high salaries or... it's continuing to make sure that these centres stay open and that the women get the help. Even the men, get the help they need and get advice that they need. We do offer counselling. We're very much a one-stop-shop so there are therapeutic services here as well. The practical and the emotional side, they get that help.

It is clear from the narratives in this section that although employment is an essential bridge towards the transformation of self, it is just as much about cleansing one self and helping others to get back on track with their lives. A number of researchers (e.g. Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998, Mischkowitz, 1994, Farrall, 2002) have provided evidence that desistance is associated with gaining employment because it provides financial stability and security as well as enables one to reintegrate. But most of the participants in this study felt that employment offered much more than this because employment enabled them to make amends. This is consistent with some of Maruna's (2001) participants who were already engaged, or seeking employment in generative areas like counselling, while few members of a different sample were working in this field or expressed a desire to do so. One participant in Healy & O'Donnell's (2008) study felt that a decent job was beyond his reach because of his criminal history and health problems, so felt it was not worth seeking employment. In this study however, employment has been an essential channel through which the participants were able to give something back (Maruna, 2001).

Carla has been working with one of the largest charities in the North East of England helping those who have drug and alcohol dependency with housing. Carla had issues with drugs and alcohol herself and has drawn on her experiences to enhance her work. Housing is one of the most important factors in re-offending. Often unstable and unsuitable housing leads to re-offending (Pike, 2014).

Carla: We deliver drug and alcohol contracts integrated with end of management. Housing – all sorts. We are a social enterprise.

Carla is proud to be working in this area and speaks highly of her employers. Research supports the benefits of ex-offenders working in a mentoring role such as counselling and drug and alcohol services. Kavanagh & Borrill, (2013) highlight how ex-offenders like Carla and other participants report strong feelings of turning their lives around by being in a professional position. And where they are respected amongst their peers and colleagues and also how they felt they were accepted in the community and workplace as a professional worker instead of being perceived as an ex-offender.

As discussed earlier, Paul now works as a housing manager which has included accommodating many ex-offenders. Here he discussed how he helps them:

DH: I know that you have this leaning towards helping people. That seems to be part of your nature would that be fair to say?

Paul: Yes, very much so. Twenty-five Christmas dinners I cooked all on my own [laughs]. I didn't think it was right for somebody to spend...it's bad enough when you spend Christmas Day in a bedsit on your own without any family. I thought [stutters] for them not to have lunch as well then it must be dreadful.

This may or may not be Paul's way of redeeming himself as he continues to help others who are in need of help but the redemption self appears to be a prominent aspect of the desistance journey whereby each participant has adopted a narrative that suggests they are working towards eliminating their criminal pasts (Maruna, 2001).

Halkovic & Fine (2013) studied former prisoners who had all entered higher education with an aim to try and understand the journeys that ex-offenders take when they decide to become students. They wanted to uncover the motivations that drive them, the obstacles they face, the supports that sustain them and to examine the contributions that these students bring to the university and to their communities. They concluded that their participants were an inspiring group of marginalised 'others' suggesting that they have much to contribute to colleges and universities through knowledge, reflection, a sense of debt and a biography of transformation (Maruna, 2001). Halkovic & Fine's reference to their obligation to 'give back' resonates with Maruna's (2001) 'redemptive script' and they suggest that although the cases in their study may be exceptional (i.e. each individual has overcome incredible obstacles to get into and through college) their stories are

also diverse. This indicates that a wide range of people with varied backgrounds and criminal justice experiences have been successful in their transitions and have defined that success in their own terms. But sometimes success is delayed by stigmatisation and discriminative behaviours from others.

Earlier, Dylan's negative experiences after disclosing his past were discussed and how this impacted on his sense of self. This was in relation to the painful narrative, whereas this section shows one of Dylan's more positive narratives in relation to disclosing his past which highlights the dichotomy of his experiences. Before going to university Dylan had studied for an access course to enter university where he says he only had positive experiences:

Dylan: Everybody knew I was an ex-offender there. All the courses that I did that year course on drugs and society. Everybody knew. That was run by police officers that had nicked me. It was just a great experience. [...] It was strange these police officers had come. They didn't have the uniform on, and it's the first time I'd been around police officers in a positive experience. Even now when I see a police officer in uniform I will just get scared and start getting sweaty palms. I think that being a part of that cage course [course name] with the police officer on it was a positive experience. It made me understand that police officers are humans as well. I didn't see them as monsters as much.

Therefore, Dylan's positive experiences here were not only from his peers but also from his tutors, some of who were police officers and who had arrested him during his criminal career. It emphasises McNeill's (2006) claim about the importance of strong, positive social ties in relation to sustained desistance. Dylan did not return to crime but in terms of this theses argument towards there being an identity desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016), his identity was compromised by his earlier experiences at university. Stacey had a very similar experience to Dylan whereby she was taught by former police officers and as Dylan found, the experience was enlightening:

Stacey: The support that I got throughout university was amazing. I couldn't have asked for better lecturers. Bearing in mind they are all ex-police on my course, and I wouldn't even sit in a room with a police officer prior to that. I really struggled.

DH: Do you think that being taught by police officers, or former police officers helped break down barriers for you?

Stacey: Yes, definitely.

Being part of a student culture led by police officers was a very powerful experience for both Dylan and Stacey who were able to re-evaluate their sense of selves in relation to how they had always viewed the police as being their adversaries. In the larger scheme of things this highlights a very important argument stemming from the earlier discussion around prisons and desistance (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016). Dylan and Stacey's experiences, demonstrate that there is clear evidence that positive social interaction with individuals from the criminal justice system can make positive changes. Maruna (2001) stated that his participants were able to re-interpret their pasts in order to identify their new statuses. The positive social interaction between these police officers, Dylan and Stacey was a very positive experience for both of these individuals. And as discussed earlier, in complete contrast to how they Dylan was discriminated against by his fellow students and how Stacey was treated with distrust and suspicion by her clients at work who were young offenders and although unknown by them, shared the same lived experiences with Stacey.

The impact of social interaction with police officers was significant for Dylan and Stacey's transformation of self but in the wider context it adds to this study's argument for a desistance approach within the criminal justice system. Tariq's example below adds to this argument through the work he is doing with the local police. Dylan and Stacey had been persistent offenders from a young age whereas Tariq was a one-off offender (Maruna, 2008) yet had committed a serious offence. However, he has worked hard to distance himself from his past and is now committed to working with families who experience substance and alcohol abuse and is even involved in a voluntary group at his local police station:

Tariq: I work with families who are affected by substance misuse and alcohol abuse. So, I don't work with the person misusing substance or alcohol I work with their family. That's my main job and the other time I've got a second job. One of my dad's mates for a bit of extra cash. You'll find this interesting; I'm an independent advisory group at the local police station.

As mentioned earlier, Tariq had re-entered education as some of the others had which had enabled him to transform his life, yet despite Tariq's hard work and huge transformation, he still feels he must do more to redeem himself:

Tariq: I'm still trying to prove myself. I don't need to but I feel I have to. I feel I have to and now I've got my master's [degree] it does make me feel a lot better.

Although Tariq could not be described as a persistent offender, he used his experiences of prison and the criminal justice system to good use. His strongest factor was that he had strong family support which may be why he has managed to make a smoother passage into employment than some of the others. His transition was similar to a small minority of the sample, in that he was already at university when he was arrested. His transition was smoother than most but not one that has been without difficulties. Tariq is from a Pakistani family and though his family were all very supportive, their closely-knit community were not always as forgiving:

Tariq: When the incident occurred, people came around and they were quite sympathetic towards my family. No one ever said anything. They don't generally tend to say things to your face. It will be a case of later on they will be talking about so-and-so's son is in prison, did you hear about so-and-so's son, he did a bit of time. That carries a lot of weight in our culture because, not to say that shame isn't an issue in every culture, but it carries a lot of weight in our culture. It's really important and people attach a lot of value to it.

Again shame (Maruna, 2001) becomes a significant factor in Tariq's transition which as discussed earlier had a significant impact on Charlie and Peter. Tariq explains that convictions carry a lot of weight in the Pakistani culture because of the shame people attach to them and that redemption is an expectation where great emphasis is placed upon 'giving back' (bid). It is also essential that individuals understand the severity of their misdemeanours. Although Tariq was the only person in this sample from an ethnic minority, this is an additional area where the pains of desistance could be further explored (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016).

Calverley's (2013) sample of Indian desisters differed to Maruna's (2001) sample who wanted to take on the role of 'wounded healers' (P.102), because they were more focussed on 'giving back' to their close relatives such as their parents who had helped and shielded them. This ties in with the earlier discussion about social bonds and how this study has found that through the strengthening of social bonds (Laub & Sampson, 1993, 2003) participants felt more able to give something back (Maruna, 2001). Calverley argues that there is pressure on these families to uphold a level of respectability during the aftermath of their son's criminality.

Although Tariq is Pakistani, for Indian desisters, it is usual to be afforded the support of their families which gives them a lot of love and support, however this also comes with certain expectations. What was of particular interest was what Calverley describes as an absence of labelling (Becker, 1963) and stigmatisation (Goffman, 1963) from Indian families.

The power of narrative enables a redemptive self through generative roles to make amends as ‘wounded healers’ (Maruna, 2001, p., 102) guiding others away from making the same mistakes. But it also acts as a self healing process whereby the use of personal and painful experiences enable individuals to make sense of the journey’s their lives have taken (Frank, 1995). They do this with their clients, students and customers through their generative employment roles such as counselling. Interestingly, Calverley’s sample of Indian desisters offers an insight into cultural differences around expectations of redemption (Maruna, 2001). Although Tariq was from a Pakistani background, Calverley’s findings of Indian desisters do correspond with what Tariq says in his interview. But although the participants are able to make amends and help others, it is done through the process of reliving painful experiences. The general process throughout this chapter is that all the participants experienced ongoing pains of desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) which have become an ongoing and even accepted aspect of their cognitive transformations. But as McAdams (2006) argues, sometimes painful experiences draw individuals together through a common theme which is why the participants felt motivated to help others.

6.5 Belonging to a moral community

As discussed in the previous section, for some of the participants, the higher education community was the essence of their identity transformation (Darke & Aresti, 2016) which was not just about the learning process, improving their cognitive skills and a broadening of their knowledge, but also the social environment and new culture that university life offered. Living on university campus enabled more than just an escape from difficult environments, it involved a psychosocial process where participants were able to become free from many of the physical, emotional and social constraints that dominated their lives. And for

some, moving to university campus was as important towards their identity transitions as it their internally developed identity shifts (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2016).

We saw earlier how Paul was advised by the prison authorities to hide the fact he was gay in case of bullying and intimidation. In contrast to the prison environment which as we have seen in terms of education is reinventive, university was the environment where he was able to express his sexuality which he said had been suppressed for many years. But belonging to the university culture provided time and space whereby he could express freedom without the conflict of stigma (Goffman, 1963). Here Paul talks about his time at university:

Paul: Because of the people I was associating with. I think it makes me the person I am today. I loved it. That was the first time in my life I felt I could be myself. I could be open with anyone. It was just relaxed and just so laid back. Even though I was based at the [anon] campus, obviously I was commuting between Stockton and (stutters) the [university] campus. I actually rented a room in the halls of residence at the [university] campus just so I could be away from home. Just to get that little bit of freedom.

The university campus provided a new social environment which further developed a psychosocial process of changed identities - especially for those who lived in halls of residence. Paul's example resonates with my earlier discussion about the paradoxes of total institutions (Goffman, 1963) whereby the prison environment was the catalyst for Paul's early transformations but at the same time he had to be secretive about his sexuality. The university culture provided Paul with the opportunity to be open and for the first time in his life, himself.

However, some of the participants were not permitted to live in halls due to their convictions so although living in university halls of residence could potentially offer them escape as well as reintegration, they had to remain within the environment from which their past offending was associated:

Dylan: They [university] got back in touch with me and said we need to interview you about your criminal record, "could you send us a list"? I sent them a list, they had a meeting or something (amongst themselves) and said I am allowed to come to university, but I'm not allowed to use the student accommodation. I wasn't allowed to live in halls and stuff because of the violence on my record.

Although the university accepted Dylan, they required a list of his convictions to ensure they had all the facts. This may be regarded as discriminative, but universities see it as necessary to ensure the safety of other students. But one may ask how knowing of someones convictions provides safety? Knowing of someone's convictions is merely a bureaucratic way of claiming to have followed procedure but in practical terms it serves no purpose. If someone was to re-offend while at university then, knowing about their past convictions would not prevent this happening any more than someone who does not have any past convictions. But the important thing to remember is that universities are only at liberty to request information about 'unspent' convictions which legally have to be declared at job interviews, insurance claims and for some university courses and therefore students with 'spent' convictions can and are studying at university because legally they do not have to declare them. The essential point here is that while universities are keen to weed out those with certain criminal convictions to decide on their eligibility to study at university, many applicants are already studying at there and continue to enter university because of the 'spent' 'unspent' legislation.

Speaking about the universities decision not to allow him to reside at the halls of residence, Dylan added:

Dylan: It (halls of residence) could be quite chaotic and it think they were afraid me being a bit older, maybe I would lash out. [...] I'm glad now, because in the first year I was living with eight, eighteen-year olds. It was absolutely mental. They were drinking every night. It wasn't the environment I wanted to be in. I could imagine the halls would be worse than the house I was living at.

As Dylan says, this turned out to be for the best which may have protected other students in one sense but also protected Dylan from becoming caught up in any kind of behaviours that would have returned him to prison or at least made this a possible risk. But the real issue here is the universities radical view towards people with convictions and their assumptions that they will be an automatic risk.

In Judy and Clarrisa's cases, the halls of residence provided an essential escape from their environmental surroundings. Judy had been a drug user for many years and, as we saw earlier, still gets emotional when talking about her times living rough on the streets. She later transformed her life for the better through higher

education, but in order to fully leave her old life behind, she also had to completely leave her home environment. But as discussed earlier, although leaving one's environment behind is sometimes necessary in order to move forwards, it can sometimes also create a sense of isolation because of the separation from everything and everyone they know (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). As we saw, this is what happened to Judy when she left the structure of prison life, but moving into halls of residence gave her that structure once again within the confines of the university where she was able to develop new social bonds with other students who helped her through her transformation:

Judy: The only people I had spent time with for years were other addicts. I was spending a lot of time with people in my halls [...] I very quickly assimilated into this new life. It was a revelation [...]. I wasn't being judged.

Unlike Dylan who had experienced stigmatisation from his fellow students, Judy 'wasn't being judged' by other students. This clarifies the contrast yet importance of social environments and its impact on the desistance process but of course there was no question about Judy's desistance, it was more about providing her with a more stable environment, so she could continue her transition. For some, university halls offer an essential bridge, stability and ontological security, but for most, it enables a totality of reintegration. To paraphrase Duguid & Pawson (1998) for ex-prisoners entering university, *particularly those integrated within campus life*, the movement from prison to university provides them with another institutional identity and affiliation. It also provides an identity that substitutes the often, derogatory labels.

Although some of the women in this sample found the college culture essential to their reintegration, for some it was much more than this. Moving to halls of residence was an escape from abusive and hostile relationships within the home. Before entering university, some of the participants were offered accommodation within their Further Education College. This was an important turning point for them because during this period of their lives, they were experiencing difficulties, such as violence, within their homes. The college's acknowledgement of disadvantaged students in need of accommodation was a tremendous boost. It is common for universities to offer accommodation but rarely Further Education colleges. This highlights once again Pike's (2014) findings of how ex-prisoners

often struggled to continue their education because of poor accommodation such as bed and breakfasts and probation hostels. For some of the women in this study, their own homes were unsuitable because of domestic violence from abusive partners. Clarissa was in an abusive relationship which was detrimental to her studies and unhealthy for her children:

Clarissa: I was in quite an abusive relationship with the father of my last two children. I tried detox; I tried community detox and both residential detoxes. Just didn't work for me at that time [...]. He used to hit me but at that time I thought I deserved that [...] because I was a heroin addict and he wasn't. Although he smoked weed and drank quite a bit at that time [...]. I was being sneaky and stuff like that you know. I used to nick money off him.

Consistent with Debbie's narrative, Clarissa believed that during the time she was using drugs she deserved the physical punishment inflicted upon her by her ex-partner. Fortunately, Clarissa eventually realised it was wrong and that she needed to escape her abusive environment which was not only an essential decision for the benefit of her educational progress, but also for her safety and for the safety of her children:

Clarissa: Yes, you can live in. And you can take your kids with you and they see to the kids for the day [while studying] [...]. Honestly, it changed my life that place. It was great what happened. I started going to college [...]. I'd done methadone for years and years and I went on to Subutex. I started going up to [anon] College. Now [anon] College is a residential place and one of my key workers told me about it. I thought "gives me a break from him and gets the kids out for a bit." So, I just accessed little weekend courses and I loved it.

Eventually, Clarissa was able to completely break free of the abuse she was experiencing and give herself and her children the chance of a peaceful life.

Gerry also found solace within the residential surrounds of the same college because changing environments for him was also essential but this had been recognised many years earlier by his mother who changed his school to try and give him a chance to cut ties from his criminal associates. Gerry was a persistent offender but once he had made the decision to change his life, his transformation continued:

Gerry: I did my first course there (Anon College) - a drug awareness course. It was NCFE Level 3 Drug Awareness. Never been in education

since painting and decorating, and this course work in painting and decorating. You're researching and writing essays and what have you. I just loved it. It's a residential college so it got me away from Leeds. It got me away from the immediate, all the risks of using and crime and from Leeds.

For Gerry, being resident at his college offered him the chance to escape the environment linked with his criminal associates. Once Gerry was able to escape his environment, his transformation of self, began to move to the next stage of belonging to a college community. Here, he began to mix with other people who had a passion for learning and seeking new beginnings. Gerry's transition was a complete metamorphosis from difficult environmental factors, drug taking, persistent offending and prison towards graduating from university and continual upward social mobility through his employment. The interesting factor about Gerry's transformation was that he accomplished all of this because someone decided to show him trust. But where does Gerry's example relate to the overarching argument of this study? Has his transformation been complete? This study advocates this is not completely possible but in cases such as Gerry's time will tell.

6.6 Conclusion

Nugent & Schinkel's (2016) pains of desistance theory provides a useful conceptual framework through which to analyse the tensions that exist within the psychosocial cycle but at the same time highlight the need to share these narratives. Some of the participants demonstrated the importance of reliving their painful pasts for the benefit of this study but moreover, for the advancement of research. This perspective contradicts a lot of desistance related studies which tend to focus on the positive aspects of the desistance process. However, this study postulates that for many, desistance is a lifetime process which can be painful and can include many tensions and personal challenges (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). The 'painful narrative' gives insight into how individuals use dialogue to make sense of their past experiences of isolation and hopelessness (Buténaité et al., 2016) and periods of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014). McAdams (2006) argues that such painful experiences can help re-construct identities (Maruna, 2001) through understanding suffering as an essential part of human life and in this sense, some of the participants did feel it was important to revisit their

pasts as a way of making sense of their journeys. The painful narrative is an essential aspect of narrative criminology (see Presser, 2009) that is perhaps overlooked in favour of more positive narratives because of the focus on successful desistance. But as we have seen through Maruna's (2001) 'wounded healer' and Frank's (1995) 'wounded storyteller' notions, revisiting painful narrative also enables a healing process of the self.

Because the participant's main objective was entry into higher education and eventual graduation, their sense of selves experienced a crisis when met with obstacles such as discriminatory university admissions policies (Pike, 2014; Prisoners Education Trust, 2017) and stigmatisation from their peers (Goffman, 1963). Education was a conduit for change (Darke, & Aresti, 2016) and for some led to an academic career, while for others, it led to generative vocations (Maruna, 2001). For some, reliving their past lives through the interviews was a painful experience which opened old wounds but for some, this was also an important factor as this led to a process of 'redemption and generativity' (ibid). This is a process where individuals find ways of making amends and giving something back which corresponds with Maruna's (2001) study where his participants saw themselves as 'wounded healers' (p.102). McNeill's (2016) tertiary stage of desistance theory is discussed which posits that desistance is not just about shifts in behaviour or identity, but also an individual's sense of belonging to a 'moral community' which could be regarded as the capstone of the transformation process. And because identity is socially constructed and negotiated, securing long term change depends not just on how one sees oneself but also on how one is seen by others, and how one sees one's place in society (McNeill, 2016; see also, Maruna et al., 2004; Mead, 1934; Cooley, 1904).

At the foreground of this study, the main argument contends that desistance does not have a beginning and an end goal but rather an ongoing set of complex challenges. Its many complexities require more in-depth analysis which has been highlighted in this chapter and include, for example, liminality, resilience, and education in relation to desistance. It also advocates that desistance theory requires a more varied, revised and nuanced approach that includes the concept of 'identity desistance' (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) which focusses not on the movement away from offending but rather on the transformation of self. This

suggests that in many instances, self-transformation takes priority over abstaining from crime which has been evidenced in studies relating to recovery and desistance (Colman & Vander Laenen, 2012).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This conclusion will combine the main points of the thesis to summarise and highlight my contribution towards a theoretical and conceptual psychosocial model and also the policy implications of this study. It will discuss how through analysing the key questions of the study, this thesis has followed the central argument that there is a distinct separation between desistance and the transformation of self. This is because unlike desistance, the process of self transformation is unending and cannot be fully accomplished (see Wade, 1998). The complexities of self transformation include stages of liminality (Healy, 2010, 2014); the processes of ‘negotiating identities’ and ‘re-biographing’ (Maruna, 2001) and challenges that recur as a result of individual existential crises (Butenaite et al. 2016) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984).

This is examined through several psychological and sociological theories to conclude that because of the complex set of challenges involved in the transformative process it involves a psychosocial model of the self which continues over an entire life span (Erikson, 1959). I argue that this set of complex challenges include several major transformative elements that have been overlooked within previous desistance studies. The idea of desistance being restrained as a result of stigmatisation, rejection and an individual’s habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984), is absent within the desistance literature. The most successful process of desistance is where individuals do eventually abstain from crime, but the subsequent transformative process cannot end for the desisters. I argue that by dichotomising desistance from ‘crime’ and the concept of self-transformation, several gaps within the literature can be identified that do not sufficiently explain or acknowledge the psychosocial cycle that desisters experience. Therefore, to fill these gaps, I have developed a psychosocial model of the self by drawing on theories of education, desistance, psychology and sociology (see Fig 1, page 100). My argument is constructed by dissecting previous desistance theories and amalgamating relevant aspects through three

complimentary research questions, each concentrated in its own empirical chapter, with its own source of primary data.

As outlined earlier, this study furthers calls from Gadd & Farrall (2004) for a more psychosocial model of subjectivity in relation to desistance rather than focussing on the probable turning points that are most likely to lead to desistance such as family, friends and employment. Although this study does not completely exclude these factors as contributing towards desistance and the participant's transformations, it does argue that it was subjective factors that made the most compelling changes.

The usual explanations of why desisters decide to make changes to their lives are marriage, employment and education (Sampson & Laub, 1993) as being the main areas that influence desistance from crime and agreeably do impact on positive life changes, but rarely do you see in the literature that individuals often abstain from crime because they get bored with it; or that because someone has shown them something as simple as trust.

Gadd & Farrall (2004, p.125) argue that ex-offenders often suggest contradictory and conflicting rationalisations for desistance: 'rarely have researchers attempted to move beyond these rationalisations to provide a more interpretive psychosocial understanding of the processes involved in desistance' such as 'the birth of children, the faith of significant others, and the desire to make amends are themes that reoccur in many narratives of reform. Yet how these stories connect to the conflicts and tensions many offenders experience in becoming parents and partners remains under-researched and under-theorised' (ibid). The faith of significant others and the desire to make amends are themes that are central in the participants transformations but also something that is even more absent in the literature is how the experience of imprisonment impacts on decisions to change (see McNeill & Schinkel, 2016). This study found that for some of the participants, the pains of imprisonment (Syke's, 1958) evoked moments of clarity which became their initial catalyst for change while education would facilitate their transformations (Giordano et al., 2002). This corresponds with Aresti et al., (2010) who found that prisoners isolated from the outside world began to reflect on their lives, experiencing an 'existential moment' where they began to question

their being. Consequently, a ‘moment of clarity evokes an overwhelming desire to change’ (ibid, p.114).

There have been attempts to bring existential sociology into mainstream sociology by writers such as Kotarba & Fontana (1984) and more recently to criminology (Crewe & Lippens, 2009 and Farrall & Calverley, 2006). Crewe & Lippens (2009) identify Matza’s (1964) early existential contribution towards criminology which incorporates two major works, *Becoming Deviant* (Matza, 1969) and *Delinquency and Drift* (Matza, 1964). Matza objected to the positivist view that implied offenders are somehow different to non-offenders, such as Cohen’s work on *delinquent boys* (see Cohen, 1955). For example, the subcultural theory is the sociological interpretation of positivist assumptions regarding delinquency and crime which suggests predictability of offending amongst lower class groups of individuals. Matza’s (1969) existential emphasis of ‘doing something’ in relation to becoming deviant is advanced in this thesis with regards to ‘negotiating’ identities. This is a reversal process of becoming deviant whereby participants consciously reflect on and re-evaluate their own identities by finding meaning to their existence.

Building on the theoretical underpinning of existential sociology (Kotarba & Fontana, 1984) and existential criminology (Crewe & Lippens, 2009), this thesis combines an existential and symbolic interactionist approach towards examining the participants transformations. An existential crisis was the participant’s initial transformational medium caused by incarceration, which was then followed by a series of symbolic interactionist transitions (Giordano et al., 2002). This is firstly done to explore the notion of desistance and the transformation of self within prisons. For example, Giordano et al’s (2002) cognitive transformation theory is drawn from the symbolic interactionist theory. Giordano et al. argue that ‘in emphasizing cognitive and identity transformations and the actor’s own role in the transformation process’ this perspective ‘seems most compatible with the basic tenets of symbolic interaction’ (p. 992). It is combined with an analysis of existential crises which evoked their initial catalysts (a term used in the cognitive transformation theory) that force individuals to change.

This thesis examined the broad literature around social theories of the self, such as existentialist themes which included ‘existential sociology’ (Kotarba & Fontana,

1984) and criminology (Crewe & Lippens, 2009); Maslow's (1943, 1954) theory of self-actualisation that observe how individuals strive to reach their best selves through some of the most difficult times of their lives. Erikson's (1959) psychosocial 'life span' model provides an explanation of a life cycle while the symbolic interactionist perspective incorporates Becker's (1963) labelling theory and Goffman's (1963) 'presentation of self' each of which examine stigmatisation and the 'othering' of individuals. These theories are analysed in relation to desistance theories (Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna, 2001, 2010; McNeill et al., 2012, McNeill, 2014, McNeill & Schinkel, 2016) which enables this study to develop a psychosocial model incorporating both psychological and social factors.

7.2 Key contributions

This section will discuss my answers to this study's research questions and the key contributions they have made towards research in this field including its potential to contribute debates over the transformative power of higher education, offender rehabilitation, narrative criminology and social theory. In relation to narrative criminology, this thesis has drawn heavily on Maruna's (2001) 'wounded healer' and Frank's (1995) 'wounded storyteller' concepts which demonstrated how desisters use narratives to help redeem themselves, self heal and also as a way of giving hope to others.

Recent desistance studies which focus on a symbolic interactionist (Giordano et al. 2002), existentialist (Farrall & Calverley, 2006), and self-narrative (Maruna, 2001) approaches do offer a basis from where to explore such complexities. In making these distinctions, this study began to analyse why the participants made decisions to change that were not focussed predominately on abstaining from crime but through an existential motivation to change their lives and their identities.

1. What is the relationship between prison and the transformation of self ?

The relationship between prison and the transformation was answered through previous desistance studies about the relationships between imprisonment and desistance (Schinkel, 2015; McNeill & Schinkel, 2016; McLean et al. 2017) and

the recurring finding that some prisoners associate their imprisonment with transformations and creating 'an openness for change' (Giordano et al., 2002). The data in this study adds to these previous studies by demonstrating that the desistance process sometimes begins during incarceration by discussing the psychosocial changes that occur during imprisonment, which to date, have attracted little empirical or theoretical attention. The notion of desistance in prisons. Existential encounters can become a major catalyst for change for prisoners which provides a basis to further McNeill (2016); and McNeill & Schinkel's (2016), argument about prisons adopting a desistance approach. Prisons and desistance further examines the psychosocial changes involved in the early transformative stages of the self within the prison environment. While serving prison sentences, some of the participants found instance gratification working in the prison education department where they felt they were able to give something back (redemption) (Maruna, 2001) while others experienced a sense of liberation from imprisonment whereby their sense of self became less constrained than it had been in the outside world. This period of self-reflection provokes an argument for prisons to acknowledge the early stages of desistance and cater for prisoner's change (McNeill & Shinkel, 2016). This thesis further builds on this idea by examining the approach of open prisons which can be associated with promoting desistance because they are geared towards resettlement. An element of trust and freedom is allowed within open prisons which is crucial because as this study discussed, being shown trust became pivotal for some of the participants transformations.

2. To what extent does liminality impact on the transformation process and desistance?

To answer this question, this study examined the complex process of identity transformations in relation to liminality and identified it as a major contribution towards understanding the complexities of identity transformation and reintegration and how much it is underplayed within desistance literature (Kay, 2016). It examined how the participants begin to negotiate their identities as ex-prisoners/offenders and how their attempts to develop new identities have been hindered by 'othering' and stigmatisation (Goffman, 1963) thus creating lengthy periods of liminality (Kay, 2016; Healy, 2010, 2014). It discusses how this impacts on how they view their 'selves'; how they feel others view them and how they wish others to view them (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). This thesis also

contributed an alternative perspective of liminality and identity shifts where desistance studies purport that desisters go through a process of seeking a ‘replacement self’ and ‘re-biographing’ (Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna, 2001). However, convict criminologists successfully merge their past with their present and provide a robust approach to their field of academe (Jones, et al., 2009), and therefore, some desisters, create a new identity that incorporates both their old and new identities. Liminality therefore is the most compelling finding that supports my argument that the desistance process is an unending psychosocial challenge and by analysing liminality, this study develops an understanding of the psychosocial barriers encountered by the participants. Bourdieu’s habitus clive (2004) adds to this argument because of its emphasis of a divided self and the confusion that is created from a splitting of the habitus where the past and present collide. And although the data has demonstrated that some individuals such as convict criminologists, are able to merge their past and present identities to forge successful academic careers, they too experience the habitus clive because the self is never fully transformed. At times their habitus from their biographical history and their habitus relating to their new upwardly socially mobile habitus collide (Bourdieu, 2004).

Transformations can be hindered by liminality where one occupies a position within two boundaries on either side but one interesting and contrasting finding to other desistance studies is that some ex-prisoners are able to overcome their liminality through merging their past and new identities. Generally, desisters occupy their old world in which they no longer belong and their new world in which they exist but do not belong, but convict criminologists have mastered being able to merge these identities that can and does lead to success. The limitation of this is that one can then become defined by their past but the convict criminologists who were interviewed in this study, have enjoyed successful academic careers where they contributed their unique perspective to research and writings about punishment and the criminal justice system.

3. What do ex-prisoners expect from higher education and are these expectations met?

The participant’s expectations that higher education would enable them to make changes towards a better future and a better self, involved continual identity

transformations. But some reported feeling that education had been more of a curse caused by developing greater insight into their own lives as they developed a greater understanding of sociological issues including dysfunctional families, domestic violence and abuse, and the injustices in the world. This resonates heavily with Douglass's (1851) classic works as a freed slave who claimed education gave an insight into all the injustices of the world. Additionally, some were met with unexpected discrimination by universities after they had declared that they had convictions (see Prisoner's Education Trust, 2017; Pike, 2014). Overall, the participant's expected higher education to make major changes to their lives including identity shifts, career opportunities and the chance to provide a better future for themselves and their children and although it did, some of the obstacles that hindered their goals were not expected.

In recent years desistance studies began to develop a narrative around the importance of self-identity in the desistance process (McNeill et al. 2012). For example, Maruna (2001, p.8) identified that 'to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves' (2001, p.7). This was one of the major findings in this study which identified how participants developed redeeming motivations where they developed pro-social identities by utilising their past experiences to help others through their roles as counsellors, advisors, and university lecturers which corresponds with Maruna's (2001) 'redemptive self' and 'rites of passage' (Turner, 1967) notions where individual's work towards redeeming themselves. These pro-social identities were further developed as they continued to reintegrate and see themselves more positively which resonates with McNeill's (2016) tertiary stage of desistance theory. I am careful not to suggest that this stage leads to a complete transformation because this would contrast my main argument, but it does support McNeill's theory in that it is a major part of self-transformation because of belonging. This was a crucial process for the participants whose self-concept and view of themselves was dependent of how others viewed them and through which they were able to shape new identities and forge social bonds with estranged relatives, friends and their peers within the university culture.

7.3 Limitations

The most defined limitation of this study is from the desistance literature which is pre-occupied by crime related factors and therefore, overlook the more complex life transitions that continue long after individuals have ceased criminal activities. This needs further exploration to give a more holistic perspective of the transitions desisters experience during and beyond abstaining from crime. Another limitation within the desistance literature and this study was the lack of representation of individuals from ethnic backgrounds. From this sample of 24, only one participant was from an ethnic minority and although Tariq offered some interesting data in relation to the comparisons of Pakistani desisters, it is a limitation across desistance studies. Recent studies by Calverley (2013) has identified differences between Indian desisters and other groups which is something that could be replicated with Pakistani desisters.

Another limitation relates to gender especially considering that almost half of the sample were female. A major finding was that in contrast to several of the male participants, none of women continued within higher education to become academics beyond their university studies. One possible answer for this could be their victimology (see Turvey & Freeman, 2011) because most female prisoners have been victims of crime, so they are more likely to be diverted towards working in caring professions (i.e. working with other victims) (see also Maruna, 2001). Generative professions such as working as counsellors and advisors have become a common theme within desistance studies (Maruna, 2001), but it is limited because (consistent with the above comments), it is something that occurs later in the desisters journey when the main focus of the desister's trajectories has since faded. In other words, the majority of desistance studies which focus on abstaining from crime do not take into account the much latter life span experiences (Erikson, 1959, Maslow, 1943, 1954).

The participants childhood experiences were paramount to how they were shaped and have developed in their adult life. Their past traumas could be clearly linked to how early childhood experiences influenced their early decline towards deviant and criminal behaviours and liminalities in adult life (Healy, 2010, 2014). This was clear within their narratives relating to past traumas and their difficult

schooling experiences (Graham, 2014) and something that could have perhaps been more prominent within the study. Some were victims of their parent's domestic violence, drug and/or alcohol problems and sexual abuse, while others were victims of sexual abuse by other relatives or members of the family and in the wider community. But their trauma did not just begin in the home because as this study found, school also played a major role in their decline which paralleled Graham's (2014) study which made links between school exclusion and prison. Some of the participants were raised in criminal families which linked abuse and later drug taking which some of the participants identified as being the catalyst of their decline into criminality. They were as much victims of crime as perpetrators where drug taking became merely a form of self-medicating - a form of blocking out traumatic memories. Therefore, the influence of childhood experiences on the participants identities, criminalities and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) would provide an additional dynamic to a study such as this one.

7.4 Implications for policy and practice

The psychosocial model of this thesis is also important for policy researchers to gain a better understanding of how the internal process of reform works, so they can better design policies and programs that can support offender rehabilitation and reintegration. And therefore, this thesis argues that research studies of reform should focus largely on the unending psychosocial processes that desisters experience and in doing so offers a nuanced psychosocial theory which eliminates the 'crime' element from desistance and develops the more transformative elements (Giordano et al. 2002). In relation to the transformation of self, this study advocates further research on identity desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) to reduce the onus on abstaining from crime which from the findings in this study and other studies have shown that this is often a secondary factor (Colman & Vander Laenen, 2012). This study found that desistance was more of a psychosocial process that included psychological and sociological trajectories within individual's lives.

And finally, a comparative study of former prison to college learners who have successfully entered university is worthy of further study. The data from this

could then be used in comparison to this study but essentially could also give us some deeper insight into whether or not these learners have a different university experience to those who enter university from the more traditional route. It would be particularly interesting in finding out if prison to college learners find it easier integrating within the university culture having studied alongside university students whereby any preconceptions they may have had of university students have been broken down (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2015). This experience enables a breaking down of barriers and therefore perhaps this makes the university experience much easier for these learners than say those who have not been part of a programme.

Narrative criminology (Presser, 2009; Sandberg, 2015; Maruna, 2001) is an essential method of gathering data to understand internal changes and emotions but from a policy driven perspective the narrative lens can also provide those involved in the criminal justice system and who design desistance based models, an alternative perspective which highlights the internal drives towards reform. This corresponds with Maruna's (2016) discussion of restorative justice and desistance where he argues that restorative justice scholars have consistently incorporated insights from desistance research into their formulations and desistance researchers have made a variety of contributions to restorative justice theory as well, therefore the idea of desistance theory informing the criminal justice practices is nothing new.

This idea could also be extended to prisons and desistance which to some degree has already been tested by the success prison to college programmes. The collaboration between prisons and universities has been a major advancement but the same approach and attitudes must be linked to all aspects of prison life and therefore, as Fergus McNeill (2016) has discussed, through a reworking of the prison model a desistance approach could be implemented. This could include bridging the gap (Duguid & Pawson, 1998) between prison education and college education where college places are guaranteed to prisoners before they are released from prison to they can continue their education they are released without having to encounter obstacles with admissions.

Since the completion of this study, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) the UK-based organisation whose main role is to operate the

application process to British universities, has announced that it will now remove the box which requests applicants to disclose ‘unspent’ convictions (UCAS, 2018). And though this is a major breakthrough, it leaves unanswered questions about how universities will now deal with this kind of information given that the onus will now be placed on them. The data in this study has demonstrated how individuals were discriminated against by universities that were supplied with information about their past convictions from UCAS. The issue here though is that universities will now take the role of requesting information about past convictions as they do for postgraduate courses which are not processed through UCAS. Unlock (2018) (the charity for the equality of reformed offenders), report that with these changes, the higher education sector will now have to decide whether the disclosure of criminal convictions will feature when deciding whether someone should be accepted on to a university course. Further research is needed consisting of a longitudinal investigation into the treatment by universities of people with convictions and how they process applicants from those with convictions (see Prisoners’ Education Trust, 2017).

Appendices



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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Consent Form for Research Projects Involving Interviews

The University of York Sociology Department

Information for participants:

The purpose of this research project is to find out about the experiences of ex-prisoners who are studying in higher education as a pathway to desisting from crime but also as a way of re-evaluating their sense of self to adopt new identities. Participants will be asked during the interview to talk about their own experiences of education and the impact that it has or has not had on them at different times in their lives.

TITLE OF STUDY: Ex-prisoners in Higher Education: A study of Desistance, Self-Change; Identity and Negotiation through higher education

NAME OF RESEARCHER: David Honeywell

- I confirm that I have understood the nature of the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.



- I understand that the researcher will interview me, and my responses will be transcribed and stored on a computer for analysis. ☐
- I understand that the results of all the interviews will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals and in conference proceedings. ☐
- I understand that in all research outputs I will remain fully anonymous and any information I provide will not be made public in any form that could reveal my identity to an outside Party. ☐
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used. ☐
- I am over 18 years of age and willingly consent to participate in this study. ☐

Participants

name.....

Participants signature..... date
.....

Investigator's name: David Honeywell

Investigator's signature..... date
.....

This study is being supervised by **Dr. Gareth Millington**, who may be contacted at the

Department of Sociology, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD

e-mail: gareth.millington@york.ac.uk

Please Note: DISCLOSURE

In line with ethical requirements (as directed in the National Offender Management Services' (NOMS)) for interviewing prisoners, '...there are circumstances when a researcher is under a duty to disclose certain information' such as Undisclosed illegal acts and Behaviour that is

**harmful to the research participant, (e.g. intention to self-harm or commit suicide).
'Researchers must inform participants that they have a duty of divulge such information'
(NOMS, 2012).**

NB: Criminal acts are NOT the focus of this research.



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Participants required for research on ex-prisoners in higher education.

The study is being carried out by myself, David Honeywell, **Sociology Department, University of York** and has the full support of the Prisoners' Education Trust.

I am looking for male and female volunteers to take part in this study which is focusing on ex-prisoners in Higher Education; the barriers and opportunities experienced by learners and how education has helped them develop new identities.

To be included in this research you need to:

- Be aged 18 or over.
- Have been or are studying in Higher Education.
- Have been guilty of an offence for which you have served a prison sentence.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to take part in a one to one interview, lasting, approximately 60 minutes. This will be conducted at a mutually agreed place and time. In appreciation of your time, you will receive £15 pounds and also reasonable travel expenses.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact David Honeywell or EMAIL: dmh517@york.ac.uk

This study is being supervised by Dr Gareth. Millington:
gareth.millington@york.ac.uk

Ex-prisoners in Higher Education: A study of Desistance, Self-Change; Identity and Negotiation through higher education.

Topic Guide

1. Introduction

- Aims and objectives of the study: (i.e. to explore the process of identity transformation and re-evaluation of the sense of self that ex-prisoners in higher education encounter (both positive and negative).
- Recording length is (1 hour) and it's unlike an interview with questions - it's more like a two-way discussion.
- All recordings will be password protected for secure and safe keeping.
- The results of the research will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals and in conference proceedings.
- It will remain fully confidential and anonymous. Any information you provide will not be made public in any form that could reveal your identity to an outside party.
- This is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving reason in which case your participation in the research will immediately cease and any information obtained from you will not be used.
- Travel expenses will be reimbursed plus £15 is given as a thank you for their time and help.

- Are there any questions?
- Go through each question as participant ticks it.
- Check that they are happy to continue?

(Check voice recorder is working properly then makes sure it's switched on before interview starts).

Participant	
Date	
Start Time	
End Time	

About research Confidentiality Ethics Consent form	
Early Life family, friends, community	
Early Education School experiences	
Life changes When did you decide things were going to be different and how you thought or felt things were going to be different?	
Positive and Negative experiences Can you describe any positive and/or negative experiences you've had?	
Education after Prison What led you to enter education?	
Identity How do you see yourself in relation to your ex-prisoner status?	

Change and Transformation How do you see your future?	
---	--

In conclusion

Aim: to reiterate confidentiality and to ask permission to archive participant's transcript for research purposes.

- Thank the participant for their time.
- Reiterate that the interview will remain confidential.

If you need any counselling or someone to talk to because of the nature of the content, let me know and I will send you details of a local Well-Being Centre.

END RECORDING

GIVE THE PARTICIPANT THE £15 GIFT AND EXPENSES

LEAVE COPY OF SUPPORT LEAFLET

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